

SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE AMONG THE PENANS
OF KAMPONG TANJONG BELIPAT, BATU NIAH:

A Study Conducted In Sarawak.

A GRADUATION EXERCISE IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR A
BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE IN ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY.

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ABBREVIATION:

The SMJ	-	The Sarawak Museum Journal
The SG	-	The Sarawak Gazette
JMBRAS	-	Journal of Malayan British Royal Asiatic Society
Bijdragen	-	Bijdragen tot de taal, Land- en Volkenkunde

SYNOPSIS:

The introduction discusses the aim, scope and significance of the study, the background of the field of study, the methodology used and the problems encountered in the process of carrying out the research. Chapter 1 introduces the evolutionary theories in general and their applicability in the discussion of the socio-cultural change within the Tanjong Belipat Penan society. It also discusses the studies done and the problems relating to the Punan-Penan Question. Chapter 2 gives an account of the historical background of the Tanjong Belipat Penans and discusses the changes within the structure of dwellings and the settlement pattern. Chapter 3 discusses the changes within the kinship and family systems while chapter 4 gives an account of the past and the present economic activities of the Tanjong Belipat Penans. Chapter 5 discusses the changes within the religious and beliefs systems of the Tanjong Belipat Penans. Chapter 6 discusses the changes within the administrative organization and the role of the leader in the Tanjong Belipat Penan context. The conclusion attempts to indentify the agents of change and the degree of socio-cultural changes within the Tanjong Belipat Penan society.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE FIELD OF STUDY

The study was carried out in the Tanjong Belipat, an ethnic group of Punan. Tanjong Belipat, an ethnic group, is situated about two miles from the Tanjong Belipat.

INTRODUCTION:

A. Aim, Scope & Significance of the Study:

The study attempts to identify the dimensions as well as the agents of socio-cultural change among the Penans of Tanjong Belipat, Niah. Among the agents of change identified were religion, ie. Islam, neighbours and visitors, the environment and the governmental policies. The study also tries to examine the effects of these agents on socio-cultural aspects which include settlement pattern, kinship and family systems, economic activities, beliefs system and leadership.

The study is intended as a contribution to the existing collection of ethnographic data on the ethnic groups of Sarawak, especially since very limited study has been done on the Penans of Sarawak. In recording down the culture of the Penans, it is hoped that it will be of some significance in aiding the government in the formulation of the developmental policies for the Penans.

B. Background of the Field of Study:

The study was carried among the Penans, an ethnic group of Sarawak. Kampong Tanjong Belipat, the field of study, is situated about two miles from Batu Niah, in the fourth division

of Sarawak (refer to Appendix I). Batu Niah is about three hours drive by taxi from Miri. A motorboat trip from Batu Niah to Kampong Tanjong Belipat itself requires twenty minutes.

Kampong Tanjong Belipat is situated on the right bank of the Niah River. It is a typical Sarawak village, surrounded by the forest. The population of the Tanjong Belipat Penans totals to 280 people consisting of 147 males and 133 females. The main activities of the people are "guano"¹ collecting, birdnest collecting, subsistent agriculture, lumbering, working with the oil company and the shipping companies in Miri and working in the government offices such as that of the Sarawak Museum in Kuching.

The main transportation from Kampong Tanjong Belipat to Batu Niah is by motorboats runned by a Penan and a Chinese and by a taxi runned by a Chinese. No electric and water supplies are provided to the village yet. The people still make use of kerosene lamps for light and obtain the water from the rain and the river. There is a private-owned Chinese Primary School in Batu Niah, but only a small fraction of the young population goes to this school; the rest, especially the older generation, are taught by the Imam² from Niah. There is a government clinic

1. "Guano" is the remains of the birds and bats found in the Niah Caves. The "guano" make very good fertiliser for plants such as pepper.

2. An "Imam" is a Muslim religious leader.

in Batu Niah. There are two Chinese-owned shops in Kampong Tanjong Belipat, one Cooperative shop at Pengkalan Lohang and a few Chinese-owned shophouses in Batu Niah, all of which are frequented by the Tanjong Belipat Penans.

The Penans of Tanjong Belipat are particularly chosen with the Penans of Suai as its counterpart because the purpose of the study was to examine the socio-cultural change of the Penans and the Penans of Tanjong Belipat is the best place to do so in view of the impact of the frequent visits from "outsider"³ to the Niah Caves and their recent mass conversion into Muslims.⁴ Suai was chosen as its counterpart because the Penans of Kampong Jabatan Suvak, Suai, though provided with schools and better houses by the government, are less frequented by visitors and they still keep to their pagan Faith although a couple of families have been converted to Christians. Suai therefore offers a good comparative study for the Niah Penans in view of the short time the writer has to complete her study.

Methodology:

The methodology used included participant observation,

-
3. Visitors from all over Sarawak and from other parts of the world make frequent visits to the archeological site of Niah Caves.
 4. The last person to be converted was done so in 1968.

formal questionnaire and intensive interview as well as informal conversation. The study was carried out for six weeks in Niah and two weeks in Suai. Participant observation was conducted in aspects such as the beliefs practices, the agricultural and other economic activities and the daily chores of the Penans. Formal questionnaire was used only in carrying out the survey (for sample, refer to Appendix II). Tapes were used during informal conversations especially when they concerned kinship systems, places of origin, legendary stories, types of food collected from the jungle and the food they consume today.

Most of the interviews such as those relating to historical background, kinship systems and economic activities are also carried out with the older generation and the elders of the village. However, informal conversations relating to leadership, kinship systems and economic activities are also carried out with the younger generation for the purpose of comparative views and for further details on aspects such as those of economic activities.

D. Problems Encountered:

The writer had only three and a half months of her long vocation to carry out her research work. In view of the limited time, she had to divide her time in such a way that six weeks were allocated for the stay with the Penans in Tanjong Belipat, Two weeks with the Penans of Jabatan Suvak, Suai and another

five weeks with the Sarawak Museum, Kuching as the bulk of literature written on the Penans could only be obtained from the Museum Library and Archives. In view of the short time available, the writer could only study the social change by means of comparative studies and had to rely rather heavily on recollection of the older generations as well as on the available researches done on the Penans of other localities. Transportation, which is both tedious as well as expensive, is yet another problem. The writer had to wait for flights to and fro between Miri and Kuching since the literature review could only be done in the Sarawak Museum located at Kuching while the research had to be carried in Batu Niah, which is situated close to Miri. The journey to and fro Miri and Batu Niah was just as tedious, time consuming and expensive.

Initially, there was a problem with the respondents since some of them were rather discouraging and unfriendly. This was because since they had always received gifts of money and other forms of goods from previous researchers, they expected the same of the writer. As a student, the writer found it both expensive and inconvenient to follow the trend set by the preceding researchers. It was only with the passing of time and with lengthy explanations relating to the writer's financial situation as a student could the respondents understand and accept the writer. However, once the rapport was built, the people were found to be very friendly, open and cooperative. Yet another problem that arose was getting in touch with the people. As it was harvest season, the people only came home at nights while

CHAPTER 1.

some of them stayed overnight in the padi field. Being a girl, the family with whom the writer resided refused to allow her to go out at night as the village was very dark at night and as each house was rather isolated from the others. Being a girl, the writer was also initially barred from going to the caves with the men and the old man in whose house she resided refused to bring her as far as the Sepupok Kechil on account that it was too far for a town girl. It was only with a lot of persuasion that the old man agreed to bring her around two weeks later.

The writer will discuss the evolutionary theory which the writer finds most adequate in explaining the socio-cultural change among the Iban. Another reason for this choice is because other theories ultimately support the evolutionary principle. Functionalism, for example, attempts to explain the mystery behind social change and the survival of certain social institutions in terms of their function and value within a specific setting. This approach thus reinforces the evolutionary concept of cultural adaptation and its functioning within specific environmental settings. This also implies that certain social systems may fail to persist once it loses its function.

Following the publication of Darwin's On The Origin Of Species (1859), the extension of these evolutionary principles in the explanation of socio-cultural change became very popular among the early scholars of the science of man and society. Among those who were much impressed by Darwin's ideas were Hooten in Germany, Huxley and Haldane in Britain and Morgan

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK:

1. Theories of Socio-cultural Change:

The nineteenth century has brought forth an emergence of theories which seek to explain the society - its present in terms of the past. These theories may be broadly classified as the evolutionary theories, the conflict theories, functionalism and diffusionism. For the purpose of this graduation exercise, the writer will choose the evolutionary theory which the writer finds most adequate in expounding the socio-cultural change among the Penans. Another reason for this choice is because other theories ultimately support the evolutionary principle. Functionalism, for example, attempts to explain the mystery behind social change and the survival of certain social institutions in terms of their functionalistic value within a specific setting. This approach thus reintroduces the evolutionary concept of cultural adaptation and its functioning within specific environmental conditions. This also implies that certain social systems may fail to persist once it loses its function.

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in America. The evidence provided by Darwin's fossil record in his evolutionary theory in biological sciences inspired these early thinkers into attempting to reconstruct along the same pattern the theory of social evolution and progress. Lewis H. Morgan (1818-1881), for example, wrote a very interesting account on the three stages through which the human society must undergo. He called them 'savagery', 'barbarism' and 'civilization'.¹ His postulation was based on his early experience with the Iroquois Indians of North America.

Another ethnologist, Edward B. Tylor has also plunged into the scene insisting that there must be a progressive theory on culture based on the basic similarity of human minds and the priority of 'primitive man' in the chronological series. Tylor showed in his Researches Into The Early History Of Mankind, (1865) that under like conditions, man's minds would work similarly. Thus, there existed similarities of artifacts, customs and beliefs between past and present cultures. Similarities of gesture-language in societies separated in time and place were convincing evidence to Tylor that "the mind of uncultured men works in much the same way at all times and everywhere".²

The Classical Evolutionary theory basically tries to:

1. Morgan, Lewis H., Ancient Society: Researches In The Lines Of Human Progress From Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilization, London, 1877.
2. Karliner and Preble, "Edward Tylor" in They Studied Man, New York, 1963, p 58.

1. formulate features common to all societies;
2. study the differences among societies in terms of their features;
3. to understand how a society functions, ie. to understand the principles in terms of which each operates;
4. to plot the broad trends in the world's development.³

One of the most popular criticism levelled at the classical anthropological evolutionists is that their postulation of the historical sequence as inevitable and unalterable that every society has to pass through every stages of the proposed sequence.³ In addition to this, the nineteenth century evolutionists have also been severely criticised for their ethnocentrism due to their classification of the development of the human societies into lower and higher levels in which the European countries fit in with the highest level while the other countries were fitted into the lower levels. Moreover, the idea of the higher society being associated with more advanced technology as well as better morality as represented by their practice of monogamy was objected by later scholars who pointed out that technological sophistication need not necessarily indicate higher morality. They were yet criticised as armchair antropologists who had built their logical reconstructions on unreliable data of reports of mere missionaries and travellers.

3. Peacock and Kirsch, The Human Direction, N.Y., 1970, pp 81-83.

After a short period of debate, criticisms and new theoretical formulations, the concepts introduced by the classical evolutionary theorists were revived as it was later discovered that the views held by these theorists were not as simplistic as it initially appeared to be. In fact, they were more concerned with the development and evolution of culture as a global phenomenon rather than specific cultures. Their stages therefore apply to the history of man rather than to the development of specific societies and cultures.

Among the new school of thoughts that revived the evolutionary concepts were the Universal Evolutionary theorists and the multi-lineal theorists. The universal evolution will be dealt briefly here because it is similar to the classical evolutionary theory and it is of less relevance to the writer's discussion of the social change among the Penans. The universal evolutionary theory, as represented by Leslie White and V. Gordon Childe, relates the cultural stages to the culture of mankind as a whole. They divide cultural traditions and their local variations into cultures areas and sub-areas which have developed as a result of their specific historical trends and adaptation to their local environmental conditions. Generally speaking, the formula of Darwin is transferred from 'variation' to 'invention', 'heredity' to 'learning' and 'diffusion, adaptation and selection' to 'cultural adaptation and choice'.

To the evolutionists, however, the methodology of evolution contains two important assumptions;

4. *Steward, Julian; Theory of Culture Change, Urbana, 1955, p. 10.*

"First, it postulates that genuine parallels of form and function develop in historically independent sequences of cultural traditions. Second, it explains these parallels by the independent operation of identical causality in each case.....

The nineteenth-century evolutionists are important to contemporary studies more because of their scientific objective and preoccupation with laws than because of their substantive historical reconstructions."⁴

The multi-evolutionists distinguish 'general evolution', the emergence of 'higher forms' in terms of dominance over the environment as represented by the classical evolutionary theory with that of 'specific evolution' which is an advancement relative to the adaptive problem. While 'general evolution' is progress in the sense of progression along a line from one point to another, from less adjusted to a more adjusted adaptation to a given habitat. Sahlin and Service define 'specific evolution' as an increasing adjustment to an environment and 'general evolution' as an increasing autonomy from and mastery over an environment.

To the multi-evolutionists, the objectives of general evolutionary research are the determination and explanation of the successive transformations of culture through its several stages of overall progress. Social progress, according to the multi-evolutionists, is not a linear but a divergent and redigent progress. Each differentiated product gives origin to a new set of differentiated products. In the process of social evolution, multiplying groups tend to acquire differences which ultimately

4. Steward, Julian; Theory of Culture Change, Urbana, 1959, p 14.

gives rise to different species of societies. Culture provides the technology for appropriating nature's energy and then putting it to service, as well as the social and ideological means of implementing the process. Economically, politically and in other ways, a culture also adjusts to the other cultures of its milieu, to the superorganic part of its environment. Accordingly, Julian Steward noted that the use of tools, fire, shelter, clothing, food and other social customs should not be overlooked. Social groups as determined by marriage customs as well as by economic activities in particular environments have led to the differentiations of local populations. They may even contributed to the emergence of varieties and sub-races of man.

Peacock and Kirsch identified five levels of sociocultural evolution as adapted from Parsons and Bellah. These five levels are primitive, archaic, historic, early modern and modern.⁵ Each level has its own basic characteristics but there may be adoption of characteristics from the supposedly more advanced stages due to agents of socialization such as capitalism, colonialism and urbanization. The process of modernization does not occur at once. The 'specific evolution' explains the different degree of change with each level of social change. Marion J. Levy⁶ in his Modernisation & the Structure of Societies claimed that when nonmodern societies came into contact with modern societies, they had no alternative

5. Peacock & Kirsch, op cit., p 71.

6. Marion Levy is a functionalist who had worked with and had been influenced by Talcott Parsons.

but to change since modern societies can never 'demodernize'.

Adopting Levy's views, Peacock and Kirsch proposed that certain dimensions may be looked into to examine the 'scale of modernity'. These dimensions include:⁷

1. Social, political and economic organizations;
2. Kinship and family structures;
3. Social differentiation, mobility and change;
4. Religion and ideology; and
5. Technology.

For Peacock and Kirsch, what is more difficult than formulating the dimensions of modernizations is that of grasping its dynamics:⁸

"What are the conditions that facilitate or inhibit modernization, what processes are involved and what are the consequences?"

Thus, the writer proposes to study the Penan's cultural adaptation in response to their environment basing the study mainly on the Penans in Niah. The writer adopts the multi-evolutionist principle that change is largely the consequence of internal differentiation of a given point at a given time. Thus, certain structure fulfils its function for the maintenance of the system and each of the structure within the system is interdependent. The systems within the society are perpetually moving and readjusting to each other. In the process of maintaining dynamic equilibrium

7. Peacock & Kirsch, op cit.

8. Ibid, p 66.

within the society, there will be change within the subsystems - some significant; others negligible, depending on the need to change and the medium of change . Bearing in mind that there may be significant changes in some aspects of the socio-cultural systems while others may seem relatively stagnant or which may be considered 'way-back', we will proceed to examine the Penan's social systems and the degree of their socio-cultural change in response to their environment. To do so, the writer will limit her discussion to the following dimensions:

1. Settlement pattern;
2. Economic system;
3. Kinship and family organization;
4. Political organization and administration; and
5. Belief system and religion.

2. Who are the Penans - in theory and in practice?

Before proceeding to examine the social change within the Penan community of Niah and Suai, the dispute over whether there is any difference between the Punans and the Penans should not be ignored. Since there are two sides to the 'Penan-Punan' question, one group which says that there is no difference between the Punan and the Penan⁹ and the other group which postulates that there is a difference between the two, the writer will first deal with the

9. The first group is made up of Tom Harrison and the other natives of Sarawak while the second group consists of a number of miscellaneous writers which include Needham and Urquhart.

former group and then examine the latter group.

The word "punan/penan/pennan/poonan/poenan" whatever the spelling may be, have been loosely applied as the term "dayak".¹⁰ The term "dayak/daya/daia/dayah" which differs in pronunciation depending on the dialect or race actually means the "inland" or the up-river. In the same way, the term "punan/penan" merely means the headwater of a river. The pronunciation varies according to the dialect of the speaker while the sound may differ with its listener. From the writer's findings¹¹, the Kayans, Kenyahs, Kelabits, Muruts, Melanaus, Malays, Ibans and the other ethnic groups who have inhabited the same land and have side by side, lived with the Penans and the Punans for centuries identified no difference between the two terms.

In view of such identification, Tom Harrison is justified in insisting that the terms should be used as terms of convenience instead of drawing the line between the Penans and the Punans.¹² Tome Harrison, an ethnologist and the first curator of the Sarawak Museum, in classifying the people, specifies that:

"From the census point of view, the important thing was to have the groupings so arranged that in any later census there would be no confusion in regard

10. Harrison, Tom; "Penan or Punan" in The SG, Oct 7, 1949, p 278.

11. Ibid.

12. The findings are based on interviews with the members of the mentioned groups. The writer's own dialect is Melanau.

to what groups had previously been used and how defined..... At the same time, it seemed likely that the census would become the basis for further classification and usage in the area and for this reason a wider viewpoint had to be kept in eye. Something was required which was practicable and intelligible to census personnel, yet capable of adequate subsequent analysis and if necessary, further reanalysis in the light of later data."¹³

As it is, although Harrison has insisted that we should accept the terms as 'term of convenience' since the analysis of these terms would only bring further arguments and add to the already existing confusion, he gives certain allowance for reanalysis in the light of 'later data' and empirical.

Rodney Needham¹⁴ later comes up with a further reanalysis of the Penan-Punan question pointing out that the Penan and the Punan are two different races of people. Needham points out that there is at least one group of nomadic people in Borneo who call themselves the 'Punan'. The Punan Aput, Punan Batu and Punan Busang are among them. He distinguishes these from the Punan Ba who have their own distinctive social structure, organization,

13. Harrison, Tom; Classifying the People, Kuching, 1950, p 272.

14. Rodney Needham had done an extensive study on the Penan and Punan groups of Sarawak. However, the article The writer is specifically referring to here, where he mentioned the various different groups of Penan and Punan is entitled "Penan and Punan" which may be found in The Sarawak Gazette issued on the 27th February, 1953, on page 27.

language and other cultural features. The nomadic Punan and the Punan Ba are yet different from the 'Penan' which include the settled Penan and the nomadic Penan groups such as the Penan Magoh, Penan Lusong and Penan Geng. The Penans are different from the Punans in language, organization and culture.

In his article, "Punan Ba"¹⁵, he tries to "delimit the Penan, nomadic and settled, from the Punan Ba, with whom, as 'Punan', they have been confused" and "to distinguish the Punan Ba from the nomadic Punan with whom they in their turn have been confused". Needham quotes writers such as Burns, Charles Brooke, H. de Windt, Bock, Low, Hiller, Maxwell, Beccari, Baring-Could, Bampfylde, Hose, McDougall, Leach and Harrison, all of whom according to Needham, either confuse the Penan, Punan and Punan Ba with each other or with other ethnic groups or make no distinctions between them. Burns, for example, mentions the Punan together with the Kanawits, Bakatan, Lugat, Tanyong, Tatau, Balinian, Sakapan, Kajaman, Bintulu and Talian while Charles Brooke includes the Punan as a branch of the 'Melansu tribe'. Windt makes no distinction between the nomadic Punan of the upper Mahakkam, the nomadic Punan of upper Rejang and the Punan Ba. Both Low and Hiller seem to confuse the longhouse Punan with the nomadic Punan of the upper Rejang. The other writers, including Maxwell, Beccari, Baring-Gould and Bampfylde also confuse the Punan with the other ethnic groups of Sarawak.

15. Needham, Rodney; "Punan Ba", JMBRAS, Vol XXVIII, part 1, March, 1955, pp 24-36.

In Needham's opinion,¹⁶ only Urquhart appears to have some more specific information about the Punan Ba in a letter to the Sarawak Gazette.¹⁷ In 1951, Urquhart reported of a list of peoples in the Belaga sub-district in which he includes the Punan Biau and Punan Tep in the Punan Ba category. In his article, "Nomadic Punans and Pennans", Urquhart supports Needham's classification between the Punan Ba, Nomadic Punans and Penans.¹⁸ He is also aware that the terms are not originally used by the people concerned but whoever might have initially pinned these terms on them, the terms had evidently stuck ever since. Urquhart lists out the Punan Busang and Punan Batu as the nomadic Punans (thus supporting Needham's classification) but he does not specifically mention who the Penans are. Instead, he locates them as living in the Balui and the Belaga Rivers in the Third Division, the Tinjar, Baram and Tutoh Rivers in the Fourth Division, and perhaps the Ulu Belait and in the Limbang Rivers. However, he does not include the Pennan Islam of Beluru and the scattered Pennan Islam and pagan Penans of Suai and Bintulu Rivers in his classification of the Penans because they have been nomadic at times, though they are now settled. He believes that they can be called by either names, i.e.

16. Refer to R. Needham, "Punan Ba" in JMBRAS, Vol XXVIII (1), 1955, p 29.

17. Refer to the Sarawak Gazette, 6th August, 1949, pp 207-208.

18. I.A.N Urquhart, "Nomadic Punans and Pennans", the Sarawak Gazette, Nov 30, 1958, pp 205-206.

15

Penan or Punan. The writer is not sure if he is referring to the same group of people she has met. The group studied by the writer at Kampong Jabatan Suvak, Suai, who have originally moved from Labang to Kampong Laee and finally to their present dwelling, identified themselves as Penans and insisted that they are different from the Punans in language as well as culture.

Jahannes Nicolaisen¹⁹ came up with the most recent study on the Penans of the Seventh Division of whom he discovered to have close relations linguistically and culturally to the Western Penans studied by Rodney Needham. Among the Penans studied by Nicolaisen were the Penan Lusong and the Penan Geng of whom Urquhart mentions as the Punans in his articles "Nomadic Pennans and Punans"²⁰ and "Some notes on Jungle Punans in Kapit District".²¹ He also found the Punan Busang spoke a different language and a had a different social custom from the Penan although their hunting economy was very much alike. However, he also discovered that

"All traditional hunters of Sarawak are called Punans by the Kayan, Penan by the Kenyah and that the terms in general are used equivalently".²²

19. Johannes Nicolaisen, "The Penan of the Seventh Division of Sarawak: Past, Present and Future", the SMJ, Vol XXIV, No 45 (new series), Kuching, 1976.

20. I.A.N. Urquhart, op cit.

21. I.A.N. Urquhart, "Some notes on Jungle Pennans in the Kapit District", the SMJ, Vol V, No 3, Kuching, 1951.

22. J. Nicolaisen, *ibid*, p 42.

Considering that the Penans themselves distinguish themselves from the Punan in culture and language, thus supporting the findings of the various writers including Needham and Urquhart²³, although the people with whom they have mingled with for centuries do not draw any line between the two groups of people, the writer is of the opinion that the Penans in Niah are different from the Punans because the people involved have identified themselves as such.

23. For the distribution of the Penans according to the places of research studies undertaken by the previous writers, refer to appendix III.

TANJONG BELIPAT: ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THE PRESENT
SETTLEMENT PATTERN:Historical background:

The Penans of Tanjong Belipat originated from the Upper Baram. In the process of their search for new dwelling places, they had moved down to Bakong where they had stayed for quite some time. As the population increased in number and due to the attack from the legendary disease¹, part of the bakong Penan Population had moved on to Kuala Sekuloh and later to Niah, then known as Sepupok Besar. It was during their stay in Sepupok Besar that they used to plant padi on the banks of the Sepupok River. They called their farming area Sepupok Kechil as it became something of a small village with the small temporary huts constructed for these Penans during the planting and harvesting seasons. In the meantime, these Penan farmers moved to and fro between Sepupok Besar and Sepupok Kechil.

With the beginning of the guano collecting during the

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1. The Penans are often attacked by diarrhoea or cholera once the population reaches a total of two hundred people. This is further discussed with more detail in Chapter 5 in the "Beliefs system".

Brooke's rule, the Penans in Sepupok Besar began to trickle into Tanjong Belipat.² These new dwellers started with planting fruit trees and constructing temporary huts as their dwelling places. At that time, there were only four families because the other Penans, still satisfied with their present conditions in Sepupok Besar were reluctant to venture into a new area. However, the proximity to Sepupok Kechil finally attracted the other Penans. Gradually, more Penans began to move to Tanjong Belipat. Besides its proximity to the padi fields, the availability of land for planting new fruit trees and other plants as well as a new, yet unexplored area of abundant food resources offered further attractions to these people. Moreover, the birdnest collecting, the guano collecting and later the archeological excavation in the Niah Caves gave them the opportunity to sell their labour and earn income for the family, thus enabling them to purchase

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2. This is the sequence of events as accounted by the writer's informant. However, the archeological discoveries made by Geoffrey Barnes in his article, "Punan cemeteries in the Niah River", found in SMJ, vol VIII, No 12 (new series), 1958, pages 639 to 643, showed that it had been used for about 100 years while the graves in Kuala Tanggap which was (and still is) used by the Tanjong Belipat dwellers also indicated the same duration of utility. There was no indication of age of the Sungei Sepupok Cemetery in the article. However, the Penan corpses buried in the Kuala Tanggap area may not simply contain the Tanjong Belipat Penan inhabitants' bodies but also those of Sepupok Besar as the writer's informants indicated that the Penans had started to use Kuala Tanggap for their burial grounds much earlier, even before their migration to Tanjong Belipat. It will merely mean that the findings do not contradict with the information received by the writer.

goods from the neighbouring shops.

The population of the Penans in Tanjong Belipat:

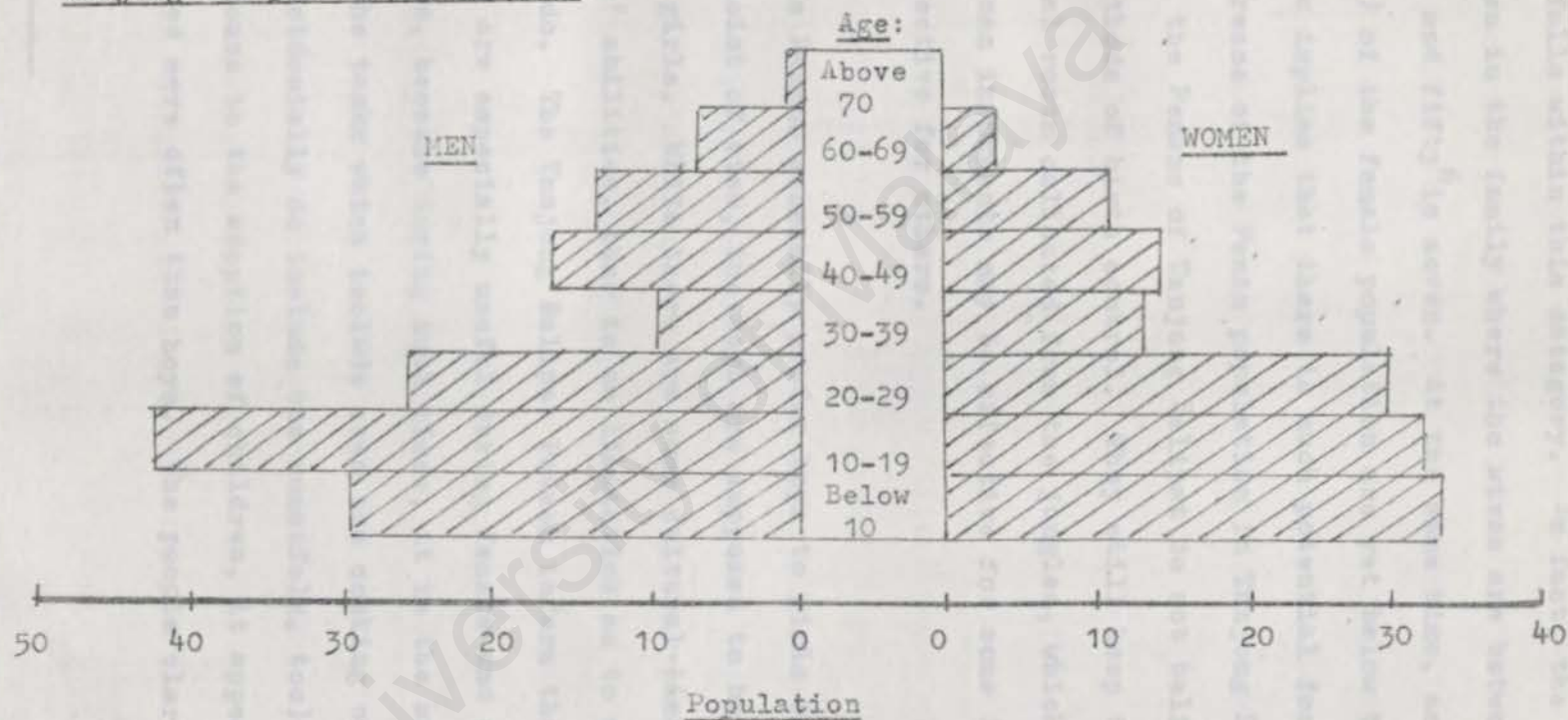
The present population of the Penans in Tanjong Belipat taken per factor in April, 1978, as indicated in Figure 1, consists of 133 females and 147 males thus making a total population of 280. Figure 1 shows that the majority of them are below thirty years of age. Thirty of the males and thirty-two of the females are below ten while sixty-nine males and sixty females are between fifty and seventy years of age. There is only one male who has reached the seventy years of age while the oldest woman is sixty-seven years old.

In view of the present population distribution as shown in figure 2¹, approximately 32.5% (91 persons) of the population are economically inactive. This number includes children below fifteen³, the women above sixty⁴ and the men above seventy.

By economically inactive, the writer refers to the population not

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3. The writer includes the age as high as fifteen because although children begin to help their parents with the work as early as ten years of age, they do not earn cash income for themselves as yet.
 4. The writer noted that in Tanjong Belipat, the Penan women have the tendency to become economically inactive at an earlier age than the Penan men.

Figure 2.1: A Pyramid Showing the
Population Distribution* of the
Tanjong Belipat Penans in 1978.



Scale: 2cm to 10persons.

Key:

- * The figures are taken by means of de factor survey in April, 1978.
- Total population of the women = 133.
- Total population of the men = 147.
- Total overall population = 280.

research falls within this category. In fact, the average number of children in the family where the wives are between the ages of thirty and fifty⁶ is seven. At the same time, as 69.17% (92 women) of the female population are yet below thirty years of age. This implies that there is much potential for a more rapid increase of the Penan population in Tanjong Belipat. Moreover, the Penans of Tanjong Belipat do not believe in the modern methods of birth control. They still keep to the traditional roots collected from the jungles, which according to the Penan informants may be effective for some individuals and ineffective for others.

The Penans generally prefer boys to girls because from the Penans' point of view, the boys are supposed to be more useful than the girls. While there are some cultural limitations to the girls' abilities, there is no limitation as to what the boys can do. The Tanjong Belipat Penans inform the writer that sons are especially useful during feasts and death ceremonies, because during such times, it is the men who do most of the tasks which include even the cooking of the food (which incidentally do include the womenfolk, too). However, when it comes to the adoption of children, it appears that girls are adopted more often than boys. The people clarify that this

6. The writer only takes the ages between thirty to fifty as examples because the writer feels that women below these ages have shown to have less children while in actual fact, they are still very productive.

earning direct cash income. The Penans start earning cash income from activities such as selling wild jungle products, collecting pepper and padi (during the harvesting seasons) in the Chinese gardens by fifteen and end their career late in their life.

Approximately 67.5% (189 persons) of the Tanjong Belipat Penans are therefore economically active during the time of the writer's visit.⁵

A projection can be made that in view of the present young population of Tanjong Belipat, consisting of 34.64% (48 males and 49 females) of the population below fifteen years old, there will be a greater demand for jobs in ten years' time. At the same time, only 6.43% (7 males and 11 females) will become economically inactive in ten years' time. This means that there will be an increase of 28.21% (41 males and 38 females) of economically active population by that time.

i. Fertility Rate and child preference:

The Penan women are considered to be more actively productive between the ages of fifteen and fifty. 39.85% (53 women) of the female population at the time of the writer's

5. For further details on the usual income earning jobs, refer to Chapter 4 on "Economic activities".

is because the girls are easier to find for adoption than the boys.

Figure 2.2: A Superimposed bar-graph showing the number of deaths among the Tanjong Belipat Mahang⁷ between 1965 and 1979.

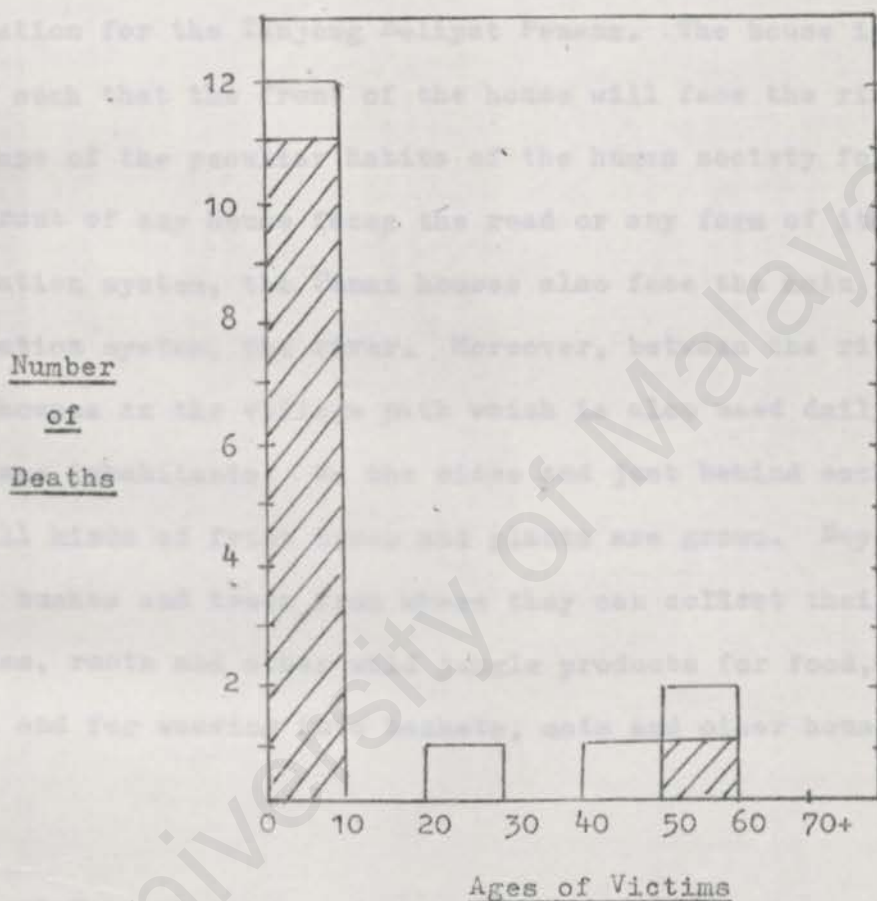
Death rate:

The death rate, in comparison with the birth rate is quite negligible. As indicated in figure 2, for deaths below sixty years of age for the Tanjong Belipat's present generation, there were only eleven deaths of boys below ten and one death for men between fifty and sixty years of age for the male population. For the female population, however, there were only four deaths as indicated in figure 2.2.

Among the male population, there were two infant mortality, four children below one year old died of cholera, another four children between two to nine years old died of cholera and one boy of five died of goitre. A much older man of fifty died of a stomach disease⁷. Among the female population, one child below one year old died of cholera while the other four women aged 22, 25, 42 and 55 respectively all died during child delivery.

7. The stomach disease is not identified.

Figure 2.2: A Superimposed bar-graph showing the number of deaths among the Tanjong Belipat Penans* Between 1968 and 1978:



Key:



Male population

Female population

* - The figure taken is that of the Tanjong Belipat Penan generation as taken by means of de factor survey in April, 1978.

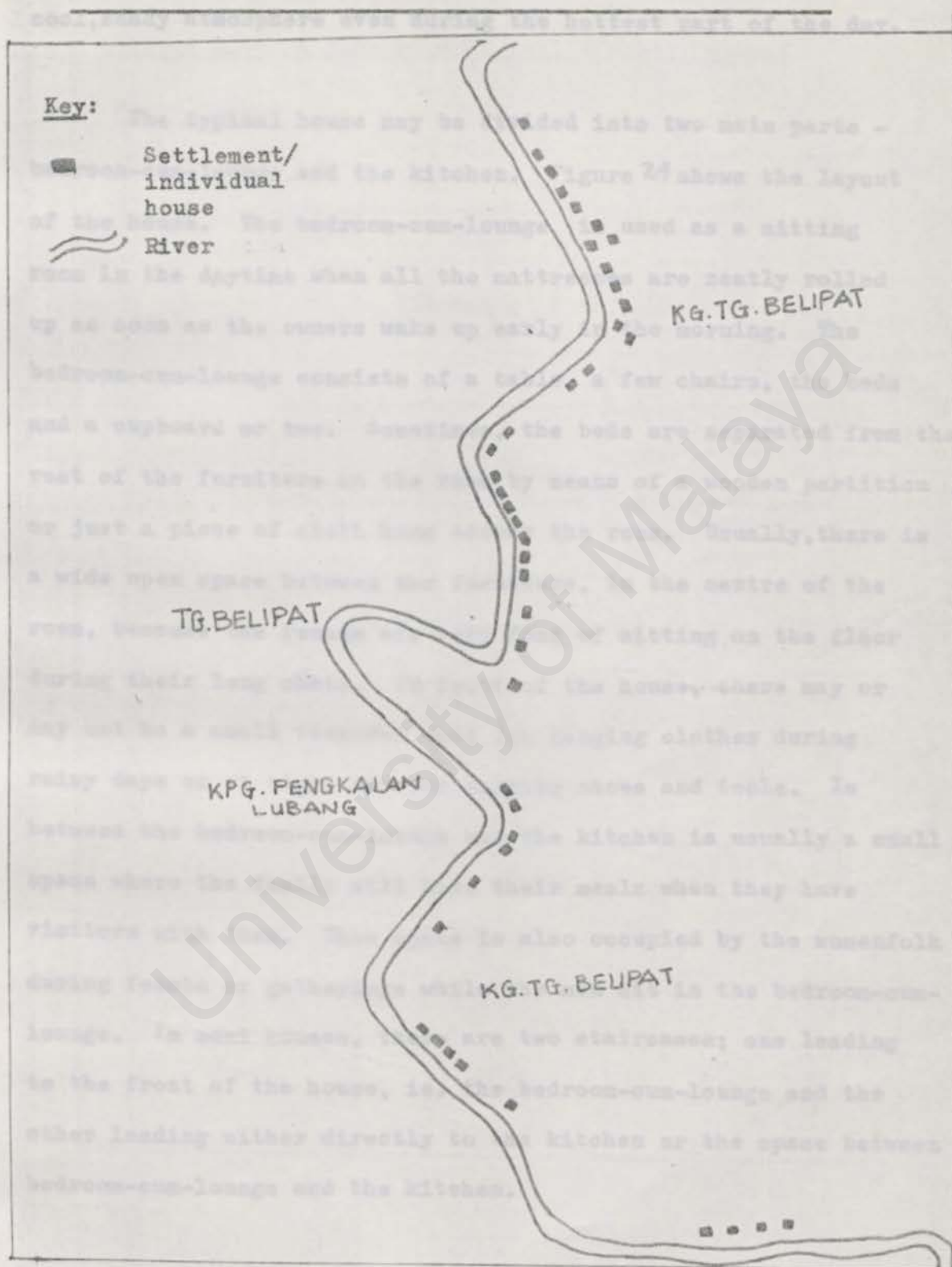
Layout of the Kampong Tanjong Belipat:

There are forty-four houses in the village. These houses lie lineally along the Niah River, as can be seen in Map 1. This is probably the result of the river being the main means of communication for the Tanjong Belipat Penans. The house is situated such that the front of the house will face the river. This is one of the peculiar habits of the human society for just as the front of any house faces the road or any form of its main communication system, the Penan houses also face the main communication system, the river. Moreover, between the river and the houses is the village path which is also used daily by the village inhabitants. On the sides and just behind each house, all kinds of fruit trees and plants are grown. Beyond that are bushes and trees from where they can collect their vegetables, roots and other wild jungle products for food, medicine and for weaving into baskets, mats and other household uses.

The typical Penan house:

As can be seen from the picture in figure 3, the typical house of the Tanjong Belipat Penans are not very different from that of a typical Malay village house. The average height of each of the Tanjong Belipat Penan house is seven feet. The walls and the floors are made of wood while the roofs are made of 'ataps' or zinc. The house is usually situated with the river in front

Figure 2.3: The settlement pattern of Kampong Tanjong Belipat:



The Kitchen usually lies in the uttermost hind part of

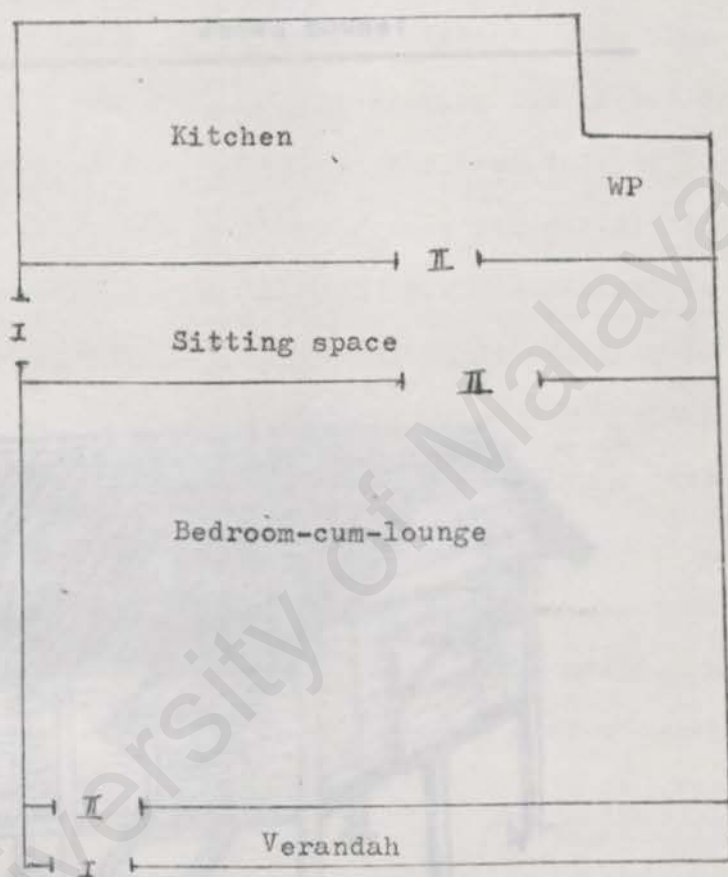
and the trees on both its sides and behind. As such, it has a cool, shady atmosphere even during the hottest part of the day.

The typical house may be divided into two main parts - bedroom-cum-lounge and the kitchen. Figure 24 shows the layout of the house. The bedroom-cum-lounge is used as a sitting room in the daytime when all the mattresses are neatly rolled up as soon as the owners wake up early in the morning. The bedroom-cum-lounge consists of a table, a few chairs, the beds and a cupboard or two. Sometimes, the beds are separated from the rest of the furniture in the room by means of a wooden partition or just a piece of cloth hung across the room. Usually, there is a wide open space between the furniture, in the centre of the room, because the Penans are very fond of sitting on the floor during their long chats. In front of the house, there may or may not be a small verandah used for hanging clothes during rainy days or at night and for keeping shoes and tools. In between the bedroom-cum-lounge and the kitchen is usually a small space where the family will have their meals when they have visitors with them. This space is also occupied by the womenfolk during feasts or gatherings while the men sit in the bedroom-cum-lounge. In most houses, there are two staircases; one leading to the front of the house, i.e. the bedroom-cum-lounge and the other leading either directly to the kitchen or the space between bedroom-cum-lounge and the kitchen.

The kitchen usually lies in the uttermost hind part of

Figure 2.4: A Plan of a Typical Tanjong Belipat

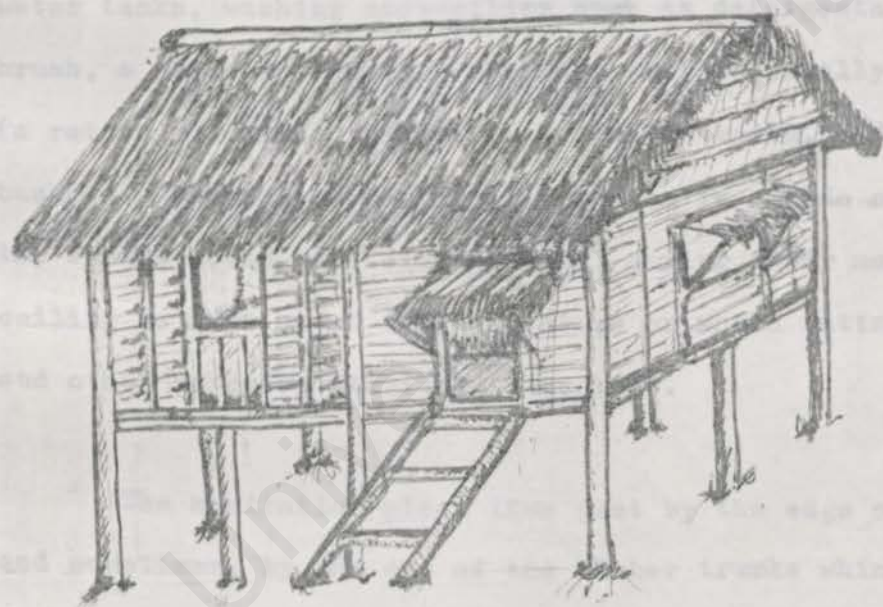
Penan House:



Key:

- WP - Washing Place
- I - Staircase
- II - Door

Figure 2.5: A typical Tanjong Belipat
Penan house:



3. These are usually woven mats and baskets, made from cotton or leaves.

the house. The kitchen consists of the stove, the cupboard, the table and the washing area. This is illustrated in figure 2.6. The stove is divided into two levels, the top for the fire-woods and the lower for cooking. The cooked food left within the pots is usually placed by the side of the cooking place. The cupboard may be divided into a couple of layers, too. The top and the second shelf are utilized for keeping the cooked food, the third layer for keeping plates and the lowest layer for keeping glasses. The table is usually used for putting bottles and other needs such as sugar, tea and milk. Sometimes, a shelf is used instead of a table. The washing place consists of water tanks, washing necessities such as detergents, sponge, a brush, a place for keeping washed utensils, usually a 'takong' (a rattan container) placed on a plastic basin, and a couple of buckets. Within the center of the room is a wide space where the family would sit, cross-legged, during their meals. The ceiling is made up of crossed planks on which rattan carriers and other handmade utilities⁸ are kept.

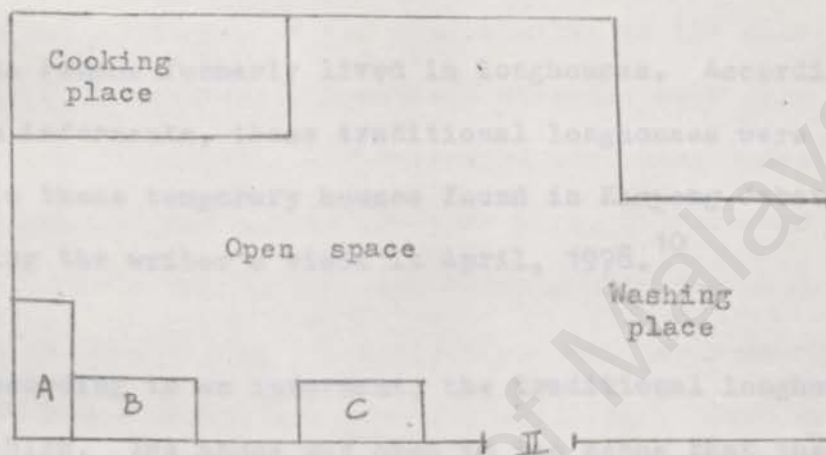
The sanitation place lies just by the edge of the river and sometimes, by the end of the timber trunks which have been tied together to form something of a raft from where the people

8. These are usually weaved mats and baskets, made from rattan or leaves.

can conveniently lead. The ventilation area is screened off from the public's eyes by means of a wooden structure built around it. The 'raft' is also used for bathing and washing clothes.

Figure 2.6: A Plan of the Typical Tanjong

Belipat Penan's Kitchen:



Key:

II - Door

A - Shelf used for putting bottles, sugar, coffee, and tea tins, biscuit tins as well as other immediate needs.

B - Cupboard used for keeping food and kitchen utensils.

C - Usually a table with a few chairs are placed somewhere in the kitchen (not necessarily the exact place as indicated in the diagram).

can conveniently land.⁹ The sanitation area is screened off from the public's eyes by means of a wooden structure built around it. The 'raft' is also used for bathing and washing clothes.

The traditional house:

The Penans formerly lived in longhouses. According to the Penan informants, these traditional longhouses were quite similar to those temporary houses found in Kampong Jabatan Suvak, Suai during the writer's visit in April, 1978.¹⁰

According to an informant, the traditional longhouse was ten feet high. The house was open in the sense that there was no partition between each family. Only at night could there be any clear divisions between them, that is, once the mosquito nets were laid down. A cooking was not much done during those

9. The landing place is the place where a person gets off from the boat before reaching the bank. This is necessary especially during low tides because it is dangerous for the boats to go too close to the shallow banks during such times. Boats, after use, are usually tied to one of the poles of this landing place.

10. During the writer's visit to Kampong Jabatan Suvak, not all the planned houses provided by the government were ready. Those Penans with their houses still under construction were staying close by in a "longhouse" in which a few families stay together, each family separated from another by means of a wall partition.

during those days, there was no need for kitchens.¹¹ Whatever little belongings they had were put together with their sleeping things. As time passed, the people began to learn to build partitions dividing the area for each family. Later, these partitions became solid walls thus forming something similar to a terrace house with each partition having a door, a staircase, a bedroom and a kitchen of its own, similar to the ones seen in Kampong Jabatan Suvak. Household utensils were very few in those days; most of what they possessed were home-made. As the people learnt to domesticate and rear pigs, chicken and dogs, all these animals shared the same bedroom with the owners, too. There was no proper form of sanitation. Any large enough holes within the house itself was used for sanitation purposes. Once the place grew too unhygienic and when too many people had died as a result of a cholera epidemic, the people would then leave the longhouse in search for another dwelling place.

During recent years, the Penan dwelling places alternated between the longhouses and the temporary huts. Some nomadic Penans were found to live in huts which they had just recently learnt to construct while others stuck to the traditional longhouses. There were even others who alternated between the two forms as they moved from one dwelling place to another.

11. Whenever the Penans of those days needed to cook any form of food especially the meat they obtained from hunting, they would build a temporary fire place on the ground where they burn the meat or cook the food.

Conclusion:

There has been a great deal of changes in terms of the dwelling places of the Penans in Tanjong Belipat since their pagan days. These changes may be examined from the structure of the dwellings as well as the materials used.

The Penans' dwellings have improved from that of the traditional longhouse to that of their temporary individual huts. However, they have not progressed as far as those modern houses provided by the government to some Penan groups such as those found at Kampong Jabatan Suvak, Suai; although there are hints of some new houses coming to that level. Most of the houses in Tanjong Belipat today, are the transition from the temporary huts to the new modern houses similar to the houses in Kampong Jabatan Suvak.

Since the traditional temporary Penan houses had been built for convenience and were not intended to be permanent dwelling places¹², they were very simple. Their posts and beams were made from small trees and their roofs and walls were made from leaves and barks. Such huts were constructed by the Tanjong Belipat Penans when they first moved into this village. Today, such huts

12. Ian Urquhart in his article, "Nomadic Punans and Pennans" found in the SG, Nov 30, 1965 (p 207) also mentioned that they do not stay very long in a place due to their lack of hygiene.

CHAPTER 3:

the people they met especially their frequent visitors, the neighbouring Chinese and Malays who continue to instil ideas into the Penan's receptive minds. Their new religion, Islam may have also a lot to do with these changes, too. With their adoption of Islam, their values concerning cleanliness and their dwelling places may have changed as a result of the religious teachings and values relating to the environment of the Muslims.

kinship relations. The reference depends on the cultural definition because in the case of adoption, there may not be any biological ties at all. The social anthropologist is more concerned with how the kinship lines give rise to the many different kinds of social relationships between these lines. For example, it provides a way of transmitting status and property from one generation to the next and in some societies, it serves to establish and maintain effective social

Recruitment to groups in the Penan society:

Recruitment into the group, like past ethnic groups of Dayak, may be determined by birth, adoption and marriage. Every Penan born into the group belongs to the group. However, unlike the Iban's tilak system, the social relationship is not affected by the change of the place of residence. They are still considered related although they may be considered to belong to the new group into which they are incorporated. The

CHAPTER 3:KINSHIP & FAMILY SYSTEMS:

In small scale societies such as that of the Penans', kinship is so important because the categories of kinship define the social relationships. The biological relationships between these kins determine the social relationships between them. Sometimes by relations, the reference depends on the cultural definition because in the case of adoption, there may not be any biological ties at all. The social anthropologist is more concerned with how the kinship idiom gives rise to the many different kinds of social relationships between these kins. For example, it provides a way of transmitting status and property from one generation to the next and in some societies, it serves to establish and maintain effective social groups.

Recruitment to group membership in the Penan society:

Among the Penans, recruitment into the group, like most ethnic groups of Sarawak, may be determined by birth, adoption and marriage. Every Penan born into the group belongs to the group. However, unlike the Iban's bilek system, the social relationship is not affected by the change of the place of residence. They are still considered related although they may be considered to belong to the new group into which they are incorporated. The

son who changes his place of residence is still eligible to inherit from his father who may be staying in the old residential area. Thus, the place of residence does not affect the access to the property of the group, should there be any property to be inherited.

Adoption is also a popular form of recruiting group members although it is more on the part of the particular family than the group as a whole. In most cases, the childless couple will adopt the child of another sibling of the same group although there are cases of adoption from another Penan group or some other neighbouring ethnic groups. The adopted child may or may not be legally registered as the child of the adopting parent but he (or she) is socially regarded as the rightful child. The child will therefore remain as the member of the family and the group. He or she will have the same right as the biological child.

Full membership to the group may also be obtained by marrying into the group. Although in the traditional society, most marriages occur within the group or with another Penan group, there are also cases of exogamy whereby a Penan acquires his partner from another neighbouring ethnic groups.

B. Marriages:

The most common type of marriage among the present and the past Penans is monogamy whereby a person (whether male or female) has only one spouse. There is but one instance of a man having two wives at the same time; although he is now staying with his first wife while the second wife is now in Kuala Baram. There are also instances of divorces and remarriages. The writer was not able to obtain records of divorces and remarriages prior to the Penans' stay in Tanjong Belipat, but among the present Penans of Tanjong Belipat, there are three cases of divorces and remarriages. In two of the cases, the merely had a divorce and remarriage. In the third case, the woman had two divorces and in both cases, she remarries again. Of the three divorces cases of divorces, one of the men remain unmarried until today. However, there are also cases of widowers remaining unmarried after the deaths of their wives. There are yet five cases of confirmed bachelors of which two of them adopted daughter of their own from the neighbouring Iban communities to keep the houses for them. It is interesting to note that while the women are more inclined towards marriages, the men prefer to live their lives all on their own, without a wife.

There is no restriction to marriage other than siblings and that of a parent-child relationship. First cousins onwards are allowed to marry each other. Should siblings be found having sexual relations with each other, the penalty in the past was

death. Today, the offenders will be dealt with by the Islamic court instead of their customary law. The traditional marriage custom is similar to the Islamic Law which they now follow in that they may marry anyone apart from their siblings and those of the parent-child relationships.

There is also no age limit to marriage. As seen from figure , although the majority of the married couples' age differences fall within one to nine years, that 71.8% (28 out of 39 marriages), there are cases of couples whose ages differ between ten to twenty-seven. 23.1% (9 out of 39 marriages) fall under this category. There are also two cases of marriages whereby the men are younger than the women by two and four years respectively.

In the early days, there was little formal ceremonies as there is today. According to the writer's informant, the young man could select his choice among the eligible young ladies. With the parents' permission, they would try out their life together. The man would stay in the parents of the girl's home. If they suited each other, the man would give the girl's parents one blowpipe, one dog, one cooking pot, one parang and one axe although these were not important prerequisites to marriage. If the man continued to stay with the girl for more than five days, they were considered married. An informant once told the writer that it was easy to find out if the couple was already married or otherwise. If they were married, they would be found going together among groups of friends and in front of visitors.

Figure 3.1: A diagram showing the age differences between married couples of the Tanjong Belipat Penan population:

Age differences	number of marriages*	%
1 - 4	15	40.54
5 - 9	13	35.14
10 - 14	5	13.51
15 - 19	2	5.40
20 - 24	1	2.70
25 - 29	1	2.70
TOTAL	(37)	(99.99)

* The number only includes the marriages in which the men are older. Only two cases are known where the wives are older than the husbands.

Today, the marriage practices follow the Islamic Law as the people are now all Muslims.

Places of residence after marriage may be virilocal or uxerilocal. Today, although the newly wedded couples may initially stay with either the man's or the woman's parents for quite a while, they will usually move out once their new homes are ready.

C. Divorce:

Divorce, like marriage, is also carried out as stipulated by the Islamic Law.

Divorce may be caused by incompatibilities or the inability of the wife to bear children. No fine is imposed on divorce by mutual consent. However, in the case where mutual consent is absent, the guilty party must pay the "injured" party some form of fine. The fine may include spear, knife, cooking pot, blow-pipe or valuable beads. In addition to that, the children and any property they may have acquired after marriage will belong to the "injured" party.

After divorce, each spouse may live on their own or return to their original families, and the divorced couple will treat each other as friends. There is usually no ill-feeling between the families, too. It seems that divorce and marriage are accepted among the Penans as nothing unusual nor as something that is embarrassing.

Among the present generation of Penans in Tanjong Belipat, the writer records only three divorce cases in which all the women remarry while two of the men remarry and one remains single. Divorce is accepted without any stigma on both the men and the women.

D. Descent System and Inheritance:

Kinship may be reckoned either bilineally or unilineally. In most modern societies, kinship is reckoned bilineally by tracing the kinship network more or less equally through both the paternal and the maternal lines. By unilineal kinship system, the kinsmen are traced either through one parent only or by emphasizing more on one parent than the other. In a patrilineal society, the kinsmen will be traced through the paternal line. Status and descent are transmitted through the paternal line while the social relationships are determined by their paternal affiliation. In a matrilineal society, it is just vice versa.

For the Penans, the descent line is traced bilineally. It means that both the parents and their predecessors are taken into account when it comes to reckoning the kinsmen of the Ego. It is therefore not an unusual phenomenon when the whole village are sometimes all kinsmen. This, however, does not affect the marriage patterns as it is already mentioned that only siblings and those of the parent-child relationship are prohibited to marry.

During their nomadic days, the Penans had little or no belongings of much significance. Whatever they needed was not inaccessible from their existing environment. As they moved from place to place, they found it most convenient to have as little property as possible. This means that there would be little to inherit. Thus, little significance is placed on inheritance.

However, should there be any wealth to pass on, the dying parent would divide their wealth into two; of which one half would be divided among the sons and the other half among the daughters, irrespective of the number of sons or daughters he may have.

Today, in Tanjong Belipat, as it has been noted that the population is now all Muslim, accordingly, the Penans divide the inheritance whereby two-thirds is allocated for the sons and one-third for the daughters. The wealth may be divided by the father who is the head of the household just before his death or divided by the village headman on the death of the father of the bereaved family. The allocation will be distributed equally among the children of the same sex.

E. Kinship terminology and social relations:

Similar to Rodney Needham's findings², the Penans of Tanjong Belipat today still employ a cognatic form of reckoning their relationships. With reference to figure 3.2, although some of the Bakong Penan terminology have been retained and although some terms of the Bintulu Melanaus has also crept in, the same terminology as noted by Needham is applied by the Tanjong Belipat Penans today.³

According to Rodney Needham,

"..... the more solidary and traditional groups use more names while less integrated and more assimilated coastal groups use or recognize fewer terms,"⁴

Although Needham was referring to death-names, the writer feels that this description applies to the present Tanjong Belipat Penans in the sense that they are more assimilated and in using other languages such as Bahasa Melayu Sarawak and Bintulu Melanau, the original Penan language is gradually disappearing especially

2. Rodney Needham, "Age, Category and Descent" in Bijdragen, Deel, 122, 1966.

3. Rodney Needham, "Death-names & Solidarity in the Penan Society" in Bijdragen, Deel 121, p 69.

with the new generation.⁵

Figure 3.2: A diagram showing the kinship terminology used by the Penans of Tanjong Belipat, Niah, today:

Relationship	<u>Terminology</u>		
	Penan Bakong	Penan Niah ^②	Bint. Mel. [*]
Grandfather/ grandmother	Pok	Tepun	Tepou
Father	Tamoi	Tamen	Tama
Mother	Tindoi	Tinen	Tina
Uncle	Neruen	Vi'	Wak
Aunt	Tenoloi	Vi'	Kemama
Elder sibling	Teka	Padi' tuken	Teka
Younger sibling	Tadei	Padi' tadin	Terei
Cousin		Aong	
Child - son	Anak laki'	Anak laki'	Anak manai
daughter	Anak redu	Anak redu	Anak redu
Husband		Banen	Vana
Wife		Redu	Saba
Grandchild		Ayam	Azam

② The terms are similar to the terms noted by Needham in "Death-names & Solidarity in the Penan Society" op cit.

* Bintulu Melanau.

5. The assimilation of language may be further examined in the light of the common daily usages as illustrated in appendix IV.

F. Family Size:

During the nomadic days, the family type may be categorized under the extended family type. In those days when the longhouse consisted of a large house where no partition was made between each nuclear family group. As children got married and reproduced a new generation, they would stay in the same longhouse as their parents. Thus, each nuclear group was related to the other either as siblings, cousins or second cousins.

However, the extended family group would have to be divided once the population became too large for the longhouse and diseases began to terrorize the people. In the new dwelling place, another group of extended family would develop until it reached its maximum size again.

Today, in Tanjong Belipat, the family size has been reduced into that of a nuclear family type. The longhouse is now reduced into a separate or detached house suitable for just the nuclear family consisting of the parents and their children. In the early days where cooking was not an important aspect of the Penan's life, there was no proper form of kitchen. A resemblance of a kitchen which was built on the spur of the moment (in time of need) was meant to be temporary and was shared by the whole household.³

3. By this kitchen, it refers to a form of fire-place built on the ground, mainly for burning games caught from the jungle.

Today, however, each individual house has a kitchen of its own.

G. Conclusion:

The system of recruiting members into the Penan society remains the same except for the need to register adoption, birth and death in the State Registry. The extended form of family is now reduced to that of the nuclear type, just as the longhouse form of dwelling is reduced to that of a hut.

The marriage pattern also remains the same, though the marriage rites today follows that of the Islamic Law. It is also more ceremonious in the sense that there is now a marriage feast while there was none in the past. Divorce today is carried out according to the Islamic Law, too. With the accumulation of property in the present times, there arise a need to distribute it on the death of the owner. Inheritance, like marriage and divorce also follows the Islamic Law.

It is therefore apparent that Islamic values and practices have also crept into the Tanjong Belipat Penans' marriage, divorce and inheritance systems.

CHAPTER 4ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION:

The study of economics of simpler societies fall into two main divisions - how people manage to extract the physical necessities of life from their environment and what is done with the goods after they are produced.¹ The extremely simple communities subsist entirely by exploiting the environment such as gathering wild fruits, roots, leaves and by hunting, trapping and fishing the existing faunas. Such communities usually have to be on the constant move because as the natural resources dwindle, fresh areas have to be discovered to feed the population. As a result of this nomadic life, material goods are few and are of the portable kinds. There is no formal form of economic organization apart from the level of family groups. The other extreme is the very complex, industrialized society where the population lives in a world of processed food and exchange products by means of formally recognized mediums of exchange such as money. In such a society, there is a very organized form of division of labour where each person will have his own highly specialized job to perform and where everyone depends on each other for the creation of specific kinds of products. While the simple man collects his fruits, vegetables, fish, makes his own clothes, tools and

1. John Beattie, Other Cultures, London, 1964, pp 183-4.

almost everything else, each produced by certain specialized individuals from the supermarket or different shops and has his house designed by an achitecture and built by house-builders coordinated by a contractor.

A. Tanjong Belipat before the British Occupation:

The writer decides to divide the time for the purpose of drawing something equivalent to a dividing line in studying the social change of the Penans of Tanjong Belipat because the Penans percieve a definite differance in their lices with the coming of the British. After that time, there follows a series of progress and change until today.

The Penans, previously well-known as the "nomads of Sarawak", like most simple, nomadic societies, subsisted almost entirely on the environment for survival. Among the Penans of Tanjong Belipat, their ecosystem consists of the forest which surrounds them, the Niah and Sepupok Rivers and the Niah Caves (refer to figure 4.1).

1. The forest:

The forest offers the Penans their faunal and floral inventories. Among the floras are fungi, ferns, plants and friut trees. Examples may be found in diagram 4.2. The collecting of

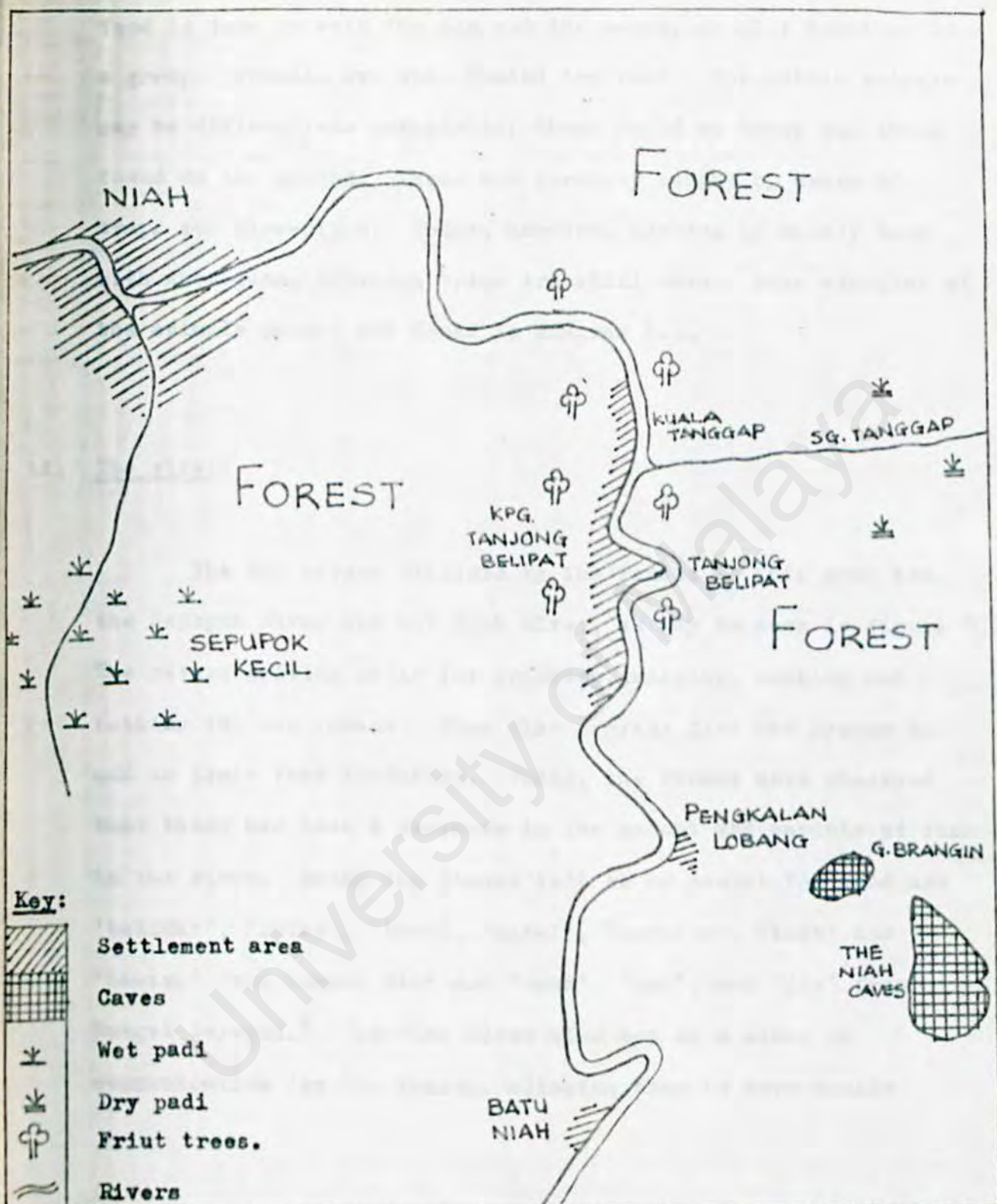


Diagram 4.1: A sketchmap Showing the Ecosystem of the Tanjong Belipat Penans.

food is done by both the men and the women, usually together in a group. Animals are also hunted for food. The edible animals may be divided into categories; those found on trees and those found on the ground. These are formerly caught by means of traps and blow-pipes. Today, however, hunting is mainly done with shot-guns, although traps are still used. Some examples of the animals caught are found in diagram 4.3.

ii. The river:

The two rivers utilized by the Penans in this area are the Sepupok River and the Niah River, as may be seen in figure 4.1. The rivers provide water for drinking, washing, cooking and bathing for the Penans. They also provide fish and prawns to add to their food inventory. Today, the Penans have observed that there has been a decrease in the amount and variety of fish in the river. Among the fishes left to be caught for food are 'belidar', 'lutan', 'laee', 'matal', 'betutur', 'taen' and 'bawang' from Sungei Niah and 'udun', 'dak', and 'jin' from Sungei Sepupok.² The Niah River also act as a means of communication for the Penans, allowing them to move easily

2. The name of the fishes are recorded in the Penan terms. There was no example given except for a couple of fishes, since most of these fishes are no longer caught today. During low tides, the Penans use fishing rods and nets to catch the fishes. During high tides, only fishing rods are used. Baits used are coconut flesh for 'seluang taen' and worms for other fishes.

Diagram 4.2: Floral Inventory of the Tanjong Belipat Penans:

Category	Examples:
Fungi	Mushrooms of all kinds which include "kulat daran", "kulat kase", "kulat aswiw", "kulat bayou", "kulat tua", "kulat tebit", "kulat bavang", "kulat belabei" and "kulat isa" (refer to the illustrations on the next page).
Ferns	"pako'" (paku), "jelutik" (paku uban), "jiai" (lemidin) and "kertau".
Plants	A variety of edible plants such as "kalori" ^a , bamboo shoots, shoots of wild bananas, and leaves of plants such as "sem batu" and "kipou tudin". ^b Plants are also collected for medical purposes.
Fruits	A variety of wild fruits are also collected for food. Amongst these are "kuvong" and "kusit" (similar to yam in its contents), a variety of "dabai" such as "silap", "keramo", and "kuruong", mangoes or "pogos", a variety of "butit" such as "jetit", "se'dang", and also a variety of (asam) such as "lepusou", "sem lemuhan", "sem lembei" and "kipou' tudin".
Roots	Among the roots collected to replace rice were "sa'at" or yam, "luan", "kapou", "kalai", "unei" and "ube' tugat".

Key:

() The words are translated into Malay.

- a These are sliced, soaked overnight in the water and then eaten with salt and rice.
- b Plants - roots, leaves and stems are very popularly used as medicines for wounds, childbearing and all kinds of diseases. The "tengaro' jin", a kind of medicinal leaf, for example, is used for wounds and blue-black marks on the body. The roots of "ruput belas", "jerangou" and papaya are used in childbearing and birth-control.

Diagram 4.3: Faunal Inventory of the Tanjong
Belipat Penans:

Category	Examples:
Animals found on trees	"palawat" (wak-wak), a variety of monkeys such as "bungat", "paud", "kelasih" and "modok", and a variety of squirrels such as "modak" and "jelamak".
Animals found on the ground	"na'a" (babi hutan), "payou", "pelandok", "pela'u" (kijang), "mumin" (musang), "pasui" (bruang), "usui" (arnab), "daran" (labi-labi), "nakot" and "kursian" (both in the family of Kura-kura).

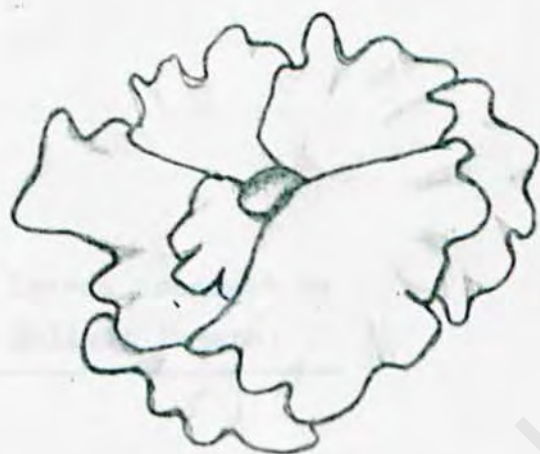
Key:

() The names have been translated into Malay.

Figure 4.4: Examples of mushrooms consumed by
Tanjong Belipat Penans:



Kulat Dunan



Kulat Jelak



Kulat Mobeng



Kulat Tua

between their settlement area and other neighbouring places, be it a place of work or just another settlement area such as Sepupok Besar (Niah Town) and even Miri. In the past, especially, they used to travel to Suai and Niah by boat but today, the road is preferred to the river. The Sepupok River is more important in its role as the provider of water for the "sawah" or padi field.

iii. The Caves:

There were some people staying in the caves before the Penans but among the first Penans to discover the birdnests according to an informant and supported by Hj. Drahman bin Hj. Sleh³, were Melibaeng from Bintulu and Jalulong from Bakong, during the early days of the sultanate of Brunei. When it was first discovered, they were simply meant for food. Later, with the discovery of its commercial value, it became a cash commodity. The birdnests collected from the Niah Caves⁴ were

3. Tom Harrison & George Jamuh, "Niah, the oldest inhabitant remembers", in SMJ, Vol VII, No 8 (new series), Kuching, Dec., 1956, p 458.

4. The Niah Caves has been one of the homes of the swiftlets which produce the valuable birdnests and guano. Besides the Niah Caves, the swiftlets also found their homes in Mt. Mulu on the Tutoh, around Long Akar on the Baram and in the small hills near Bau, in the first division. (SAR, Kuching, 1956, p 156).

brought to the Brunei foasts for trade with foreign traders.

Originally, the Penans who moved from Bintulu and Bakong used to sleep on the floor of the caves, using leaves as mats during their birdnest collecting seasons. Due to the discomfort and coldness, they devised small wooden poles laid flat between two to three feet above the ground. With the coming of the other people some sixty years ago, these "beds" were improved to real roofless huts, made of belian wood, roughly structured and unplanned with barks of all sorts as walls and rattans to keep them intact. It became similar to a form of village within the caves.⁵ However, the situation today has been modified and changed. A form of dwelling still remain but are now inhabited by men during the birdnest collecting season only.

B. Tanjong Belipat After The British Occupation:

With the increasing role played by cash economy and commerce among these people in the early twentieth century, the emphasis shifts on to a new pattern. The gradual dwindling of the natural resources provided by the environment and the influence

5. Refer to Tom Harrison & George Jamuh, op cit, p 456.

of neighbouring communities and visits from "outsiders"⁶ have changed their attitude towards their environment. They began to settle to agriculture and domestication of animals and began to place increasing importance to the acquiring of cash. The jungle, river and caves are still utilized but the people have begun to view them in a different light. Beside subsistence, forest products such as rattan and bamboo goods and food products such as ferns and mushrooms began to be sold, thus bringing in income to the family. Hunting still carries on at a smaller scale but due to their recent conversion into the Muslim Faith, certain animals such as wild boars which used to form a delicacy for the people are avoided. They no longer use hunting dogs and blowpipes. Traps are still used but generally, shotguns replace the traditional equipments. Due to the decrease in food in inventory provided by the forest and rivers, the people have begun to purchase tin foods such as sardines and prickled leeks from the shops. The rivers, besides offering water, food and transport to the people now offers cash to the Penan boatman who charges his passengers at one dollar per head for each trip, whatever the distance may be. The caves which have always been of a commercial value to the people have increased in their role as the benefactor.

6. With the increase in importance of the Niah Caves, especially since its archeological discovery in 1954, it has become a tourist spot as well as a study spot for all types of people all over the world. With the constant visits from tourists and students, the Penans who inevitably come into contact with them are slowly affected by and changed in their ideas, values and attitude.

i. Agriculture:

The Penans have only started to learn to grow food in the recent years.⁷ According to the Penan informants, they started to learn to grow rice when they began to find it hard to get sago palms. Even then, they were not used to the rice introduced to them by the neighbours, the Kayans and the Kenyahs. Instead, they preferred yams, tapioca and other tuber roots. Today, however, rice have become a staple food for the Tanjong Belipat Penans. Ferns, muchroom and other jungle food are still collected from the surrounding to form supplements to their meals. They also grow vegetables and maize to add up to the jungle food. Friut trees are also planted. Besides rice, vegetables and friut trees, pepper and rubber are also grown as cash crops.

a. Rice:

Padi farming is the major occupation for the Penans in Tanjong Belipat. They practised two forms of farming - the wet padi and the dry padi. The wet padi is planted in the Sepupok Kechil area while the dry padi is grown at Kuala Tanggap.

7. The writer's informant could not remember the real date of their settling down to agriculture, but they were sure that they had already known how to grow rice by the time the Brookes started to rule Sarawak.

Almost every family has a plot of wet padi in Sepupok Kechil, but only a few families participate in hill farming at Kuala Tanggap although there is sufficient land for everyone. The hill padi is a form of shifting cultivation and there is therefore a dispersal of farmlands unlike that of the wet padi where the farms are just together in an area. It requires a lot of time and effort in walking or paddling to reach their farmlands in the Kuala Tanggap. This is possibly one of the main reasons why hill padi is not very popular among the Penans of Tanjong Belipat.

The wet padi requires an average of forty-five minutes walk from the settlement area, depending on the situation of the house and the route one takes. Each family has an average of four acres of farming land. The rice is grown mainly as a subsistent crop. However, should there be a really good harvest, it might be sold for \$4/- per gantang. In 1978, for example, five families did sell about three pikuls of rice each, on the average.

The agricultural implements, like most intensive subsistent farmings, are crude and extremely simple. Work is carried out manually. Animals are not used in whatsoever form at all. The common tools utilized are axes or saws for felling trees (especially in the case of hill farming) or for collecting branches or tree trunks for building temporary huts, choppers ('parang') for slashing and removing grass, hoes for making

irrigation canals ('parits')⁸, spades for scooping out soils when making irrigation canals and bunds, and baskets for carrying the soil. Only a stick is needed for dribbling during the sowing. If the ground is soft enough, they will simply spread the seeds over the soil. When it comes to harvesting, only a harvesting knife and a basket ('taen') is needed. Generally, fertilizers are not applied to the plants.

In April, the field is repaired once again for the next round of cultivation. Between April and August, the field is left empty. In order to fully utilize the field, maize and groundnuts are planted in the meantime. The farming cycle begins in June after the grass has been poisoned and burnt. This requires about a week to complete. The bunds are then repaired and the soil tilled. By August, the seeds are already sown. Between August to December, they had little to do but weed. At the same time, they are also occupied with other jobs such as looking after their pepper gardens, tapping the rubber or/and collecting guano. By January, the plants have produced their blossoms and by February, the husks are filled with grains. These grains ripen in March and April and are therefore ready for harvesting. The harvesting usually takes up around one month to one and a half month depending on the rate the grains take to ripen. With hill

8. Each irrigation canal provides for two acres of land. In between these plots of land, bunds are used to retain water and to divide the plot into half an acre each. Smaller drains are used to provide water to these little parts. The water irrigated comes from the Sepupok River.

padi the cycle is about the same. Slashing is done in May, and felling from June to July. After that, burning is carried out. By the end of July, the seeds have already been sown. However, the hill padi takes a longer time to ripen. Harvesting is usually carried out between April to the beginning of May.

Certain taboos are observed during the sowing seasons. These taboos will be discussed at length in chapter five which deals with the belief system of the Penans of this area of study.

1b. Pepper:

More than 50% (27 families out of 44 families) of the population in Tanjong Belipat grow pepper. Each family has an average of 300 vines. Participation in pepper growing is less compared to rice growing because of the difficulty in maintaining the pepper gardens and the susceptibility of the vines to pepper diseases. However, those with pepper gardens keep their gardens well. During working days at the caves, they clean their gardens in the evenings after work. Usually, the pepper obtained is either sold to shopkeepers in Batu Niah in cash or exchanged in kinds.

The Penans of Tanjong Belipat collect around one bag to two bags of gunny sacks at the most per day. At the time of study, the cost for white pepper is \$200/- per picul while the black pepper costs a little above \$100/- per picul.⁹

9. The prices are approximated roughly by the Penan informants.

The tools used in collecting the pepper are simply sacks and knives.

c. Rubber:

Rubber has been the main cash crop.¹⁰ It adapts well to the country's soils and climate and is therefore planted by most communities. In Sarawak, standards of cultivation and processing are generally low and so is the quality of the rubber produced. However, it is still one of the main cash crops for the country. When price is low, the rubber is usually left untapped. Its production therefore fluctuates with its price.¹¹ The government has provided high yielding materials, fertilisers and cash to planters.

In Tanjong Belipat, rubber does not play such an important role in the people's economy. There are even families who are not aware of the number of rubber trees they have. Nevertheless, each family usually have two hundreds to three hundreds trees. The rubber trees are left untapped more often than they are tapped due to the allurements of other more attractive jobs such as guano collecting, working in shipping companies or pepper gardens owned by Chinese in Niah at \$5/- per day. Perhaps, this is also due to the fact that the people's needs are simple and met with.

10. SAR, op cit., p 33

11. Ibid.

This is seen in their lack of interest in rubber as a cash crop and in their acceptance of padi as a subsistent crop. For example, at first, no-one bothered about the new Rubber Planting Scheme introduced by the government in 1960. It took some time before the people endeavoured to add the high yielding rubber to their gardens.

However, for families who are less adventurous in seeking outstationed jobs and are more settled to their farms, the rubber trees are tapped everyday when the weather is fine. The new rubber (known to the Penans as "Pulut Malaya") produces almost twice as much as the local rubber. According to the Penan informant, the produce of two hundreds "Pulut Malaya" trees is equivalent to about threehundreds and fifty local rubber trees. The people usually obtain between seven to eight katis of rubber milk or latex per day. The latex after being pressed into rubber sheets are then sold to the shopkeepers of Batu Niah, too.

The tools used are tapping knives ("pa'at") and bowl or tins or coconut shells.

d. Friut-trees:

The growing of friut trees is a popular occupation among the Penans. They grow friut trees practically everywhere they

go. Once these trees cease to bear fruits, they will move on, leaving these trees behind. As the writer walked through the village with her informant, he reminisced the past, recognizing the trees as having been planted by certain individuals or families and the old ruins seen along the way as the ex-homes of those families who had moved on to new homes because the trees had ceased to bear fruits or because of other better attractions.

A multiplicity of fruit-trees of all forms and sizes are grown by the Penans in Tanjong Belipat. Among the fruit trees grown were a variety of durian trees such as "bolak", "tungan", "bukak", "banyo'", "pidar" and "ma'a", a variety of rambutan trees including "lengajah", "rauyak" and "masilak", a variety of banana trees ("balak"), mango trees ("palam"), papaya trees ("modong"), lime trees ("limou"), coconut trees ("bunyu"), "Langsat" (M)*, "Terap" (M), "Pelutan" (M), "nangka" (M), "jambu" (M), "belimbin" (M), "rambutan" (M) and "tapoi" (M).

11. The Caves:

While they were important for guano and nests in the past, today the caves bring income to the Penans of Tanjong Belipat in three forms: guano, birdnests and as archeological site.

* (M) - these fruits' names are written in Malay. Their names in Penans are also the same.

a. Guano:

According to the SAR of 1956, the Niah Caves are estimated to contain 29,000 tons of phosphates within an explored area of approximately 24 acres in the form of guano.¹² These phosphates deposits have been accumulated for thousands of years by bats, swift and insects which inhabited the caves and these deposits have been mixed with the limestone to form what it is today. In 1956, more than six inches of about 150,000 square feet of guano was available.¹³

Before the second world war, during the Brookes' rule in Sarawak (1839-1840), guano was collected in small amount to be exchanged with some Chinese dealers who used it as fertilisers in pepper gardens. During the Second World War, the Japanese who also valued this guano, paid the locals to collect it for them. According to the Penan informants, during that time about 560 people, including Ibans and Penans from Sibuti, Bakong and Suai were involved in guano collecting. After the war, the guano had increased in value. The guano collecting was still supervised by Chinese firms as it was before the war. The main firm was the Messrs. Kiat Siang, Miri. However, several problems arose as a result of uncoordinated ownership. These were problems involved in accounting for the destruction of tools and properties due to lack of proper

12. SAR, op cit., p 60.

13. Ibid.

place to store them. A specific body is therefore necessary to coordinate the guano collection and a store taken care of by this body is also necessary for storing the equipment and tools for a long period of time. After 1959, under the supervision of the Sarawak Museum, the natives of Batu Niah were given the right to manage the guano collecting.¹⁴ Two types of licence were distributed:

- (1) Licence "A" to the Penans only at \$8/- per month. With this licence, they were allowed to collect the guano from Tuesday to Saturday every week at places specified by the Museum's representatives.
- (2) Licence "B" given to non-Penans, mainly the Ibans, at \$2/- per month. The owners of licence "B" could collect guano on Mondays only. The main purpose for issuing licence "B" was to allow the locals to obtain guano for private uses whereas licence "A" was to ensure regular guano produce from Niah, that is, for sale.

The fees collected from the licence distribution by the guano community members were put into a safe in the Museum office in Kuching. This money was spent for the benefits of the guano collectors and for the yearly maintenance of the path between the caves and the storehouse at Pengkalan Lobang. \$1000/-, for

14. Tom Harrison, Baja Tahi Burong (Guano) Gua Niah, Kuching, 1961.

example, had been spent on road maintenance between 1959 and 1960, \$300/- went to the Masjid in Sepupok Besar, \$300/- went to Chung Hwa Primary School and yet another \$300/- went to the Tanjong Belipat's surau. During the time of the writer's visit, the Penans applying for some money for the bridge construction in Tanjong Belipat.¹⁵

Recently, beginning from August, 1977, due to the decrease in the availability of guano, instead of monthly fees, tickets are distributed to the collectors. These tickets are distributed by the "mandor" who is employed by the Sarawak Museum. Each ticket costs fifty cents. This is to ensure that a fixed number of collectors are allowed to collect guano each time. With the introduction of the ticket system, only fifty tickets are given to the Licence "A" group and twenty tickets to the Licence "B" group. The Licence "A" group are allowed to collect on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays everyweek while the Licence "B" group collect on Tuesdays only.

Normally, the guano collecting begins at 8.00 am. and lasts until 2.00 pm. Usually, each person can carry as much as two bags (that is, the maximum he is allowed, anyway) within that period of time. Depending on the individual's strength, each bag will be between fifty to a hundred and fifty katis and

15. The information was gathered from the Penans themselves.

each collector takes between forty-five minutes to three hours to carry the bags, one at each time, from the caves to the storehouse. Wet guanos may bring in income between \$5.50 to \$11/- per day, ie., between 110 katis to 220 katis per day. A stronger Penan may even carry as much as 300 katis (total) per day, thus bringing in an income of \$15/- per day. The dry guano is much lighter to carry but harder to find. For dry guano, each tin costs \$1.20. For dry guano, the collectors are able to obtain between \$5/- to \$15/- per day.¹⁵

The oldest man involved in collecting the guano is about sixty years old. He carries as much as one picul (total from two trips) earning \$5.00 per day. According to the Penan informant, the youngest man carrying the guano is twenty-eight years old, though it has been observed that younger men are carrying them, too. He carries a maximum of three piculs depending on his health.¹⁶ Younger boys (from eleven onwards) do help their fathers to sweep the guano.

15. The information are also gathered from the Penan workers themselves.

16. The common sickness attacking the collectors are common cold, influenza, backaches and rheumatism.

b. Birdnests:

During the Brookes' rule, new immigrants, especially from Kuching and Brunei moved to Biah. The new immigrants also began to grab certain areas of the caves for their own birdnest collecting, thus depriving the original collectors (the Penans) of their freedom of collection and easy movements. While some remained in the caves, others made their way into the jungle again. With this exodus, those who remained decided to improve their present dwellings and equipments. While the huts remain roofless, independent belian huts until today, the poles for collecting the nests had been improved.¹⁷

The construction of the present belian poles in the Niah Caves began with the setting up of the bamboo poles. These bamboo poles, supported by rattan ropes were erected from the ground and joint to each other until they reach an opening in the cave. Two persons would then climb up the bamboo, carrying with them a rope and a pulley. When they reached the top, they would find a good place for the belian support. The pulley will be fixed firmly to something strong and the rope will then be lowered to the ground. Three persons will be ready below, waiting to tie two pieces of belian supports, three inches by five feet long to the rope. The rope would then be pulled till the belian planks

17. This has been recorded by Abg. Zainnorin in "Cherita Sarang Burong Dalam Gua Niah" the SG, Oct., 1953, p 193. It was also supported by the information given by the Penan informants.

reached the top. These belian planks would be fixed criss-crossed, joint and supported at the ends by belian wedges, two inches long. The rope would be lowered again and a three inches by twenty-four feet belian poles would be tied to it. One of the two men at the top would sit on the belian support to catch the belian poles everytime each reached the top, while the other would fix the belian top to the wall of the cave. These poles would be joint to each other until they reached the floor of the cave. The length of the belian poles average within twenty yards.¹⁸

Today, only six families from Tanjong Belipat are involved in birdnest collecting. It is carried out once in six months. The birdnests collected are brought home where they are soaked and dried in the cool places. This is because they will darken if exposed to the sun. The birdnest cleaning process is the work of the women-folk. In one day, only three to four nests which is equivalent to one to two tahils may be cleaned.

c. Archeology:

In 1941, the Sarawak Meseum began to have more organized and prolonged effort to fill in the missing bits by beginning to explore potential excavation areas. It was not until October,

18. The whole paragraph has been adapted from Abg. Zainnorin, op cit.

1954¹⁹ that excavation began in the Niah Caves' mouth. This excavation required a large amount of labour. During the early period, the Penans from Tanjong Belipat provided the main labour force. Today, however, most of the work has been completed. Some of the Penans have stopped working for the museum while a few remained, some for temporary jobs while others are on more permanent scale such as guarding the archeological sites and supervising the guano collection.

8. Sources of Income :

The sources of income of the Penans of Tanjong Belipat are quite stable and good compared with other nearby communities. The main sources of income are guano collecting, birdnest collecting and through working in pepper gardens and during harvest seasons, from padi fields. A Penan can get as little as \$5/- and as much as \$15/- from guano collection per day. Each person can also get an average of \$5/- per day from harvesting padi in the Chinese

19. The excavation at the Niah Caves' mouth carried out at two levels, the outer and the inner mouths. The cool atmosphere and the perfectly protected position of the findings had preserved them well. The beautiful coloured pottery, well-polished stone implements, fire-making instruments, cooking pots and other evidences of dwelling of the Niah inhabitants including the undisturbed stoneaged cemetery offered attractive sites for archeological excavations.
(Refer to Sarawak Annual Report (SAR), op cit., pp 141-145)

padi fields or pepper in the Chinese gardens. Other sources of income are motor transport, working in the oil company in Miri²⁰, working in timber companies and shipping companies. Some locals are employed in various government departments and local council. Quite a number of them work with the Sarawak Museum, some temporary while others are more permanent - both in Kuching and in Tanjong Belipat.

D. Expenditure:

The little amount of cash obtained are usually spent on daily necessities such as sugar, coffee, salt, cooking oil, cigarettes, torches, batteries and medicine. Should there be any extras from the normal expenditure, these are seldom saved. The extras will go to clothes, radio cassettes, tapes and other luxuries. A popular form of "saving" among the ladies is the acquiring of valuables such as bracelets and bangles. An average expenditure per month per family for the Penans of Tanjong Belipat totals to about \$100/-.²¹ Some make use of the money to construct better houses or repair and extend their present ones.

20. Working in oil companies such as Shell, Petronas and Sedco is very popular among the Penan youngsters. There is no overall total, nor individual number for each occupation as the Penans could not remember exactly who went out of the village to work for which sectors.

21. Economic Survey, Cooperative Dept., Kuching, Sarawak, Nov., 1964.

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E. Indebtedness:

Although most of them have a good, regular source of income, they are still tied to their debts, as a result of their habits of buying daily household requirements by means of monthly payment. They normally try to reduce their debts wholly or partially by means of disposing their products and collections (in kinds) in the shops or by cash; but so far, they never seem to completely wipe out their debts. Their main creditors are Chinese middlemen, shopkeepers and the Cooperative Society.

F. Labour:

There is little idling among these Penans. Farming, their major occupation demands a great deal of time and energy from them. Children of six years onwards help their parents in the farm or in collecting food from the jungle. Boys above eleven help their fathers to sweep guano in the caves, too. The children are trained to work, their jobs depending on their sexes, as they grow up. There is a form of division of labour by sex. The women take care of the household and whatever concerns with the food including farming and gathering jungle products. The men have no work limits, but usually their work concern with obtaining cash for the family.

G. Conclusion:

There is a definite change with the passing of time especially when these Penans have changed their collecting and hunting way of life to that of settled agriculture. This brings about a change from subsistence economy to that of a more cash-oriented economy. Whereas there is less dependence on forest products, the products of their agricultural labour are also mainly subsistence. However, they are now earning more income from the caves, ie. from the sale of guano and birdnest. Labour is also sold in a more organized, definite form such as archeological excavations and other works involved with the Sarawak Museum, works in timber companies, oil companies, shipping companies and government bodies and even in their own private jobs such as running their own motorboats to transport the villagers from Kampong Tanjong Belipat to Batu Niah.

Thus, although they still obtain food and other needs from the jungle and river, dwindling resources no longer force them to wander to new places to search for food. Their ability to grow their own food and earn cash income which may be used to purchase food, clothing and other needs from the neighbouring shops have enabled them to stay more permanently in Tanjong Belipat.

CHAPTER 5:BELIEFS SYSTEM:A. The Penans' Conversion to Islam:

Before their conversion into Muslims, the Penans of Tanjong Belipat were animists. During their pre-Islamic days, according to the informants, the Penans had no religion. They lived as freely as they wandered from place to place. However, they did believe, even until today, in the spiritual. This accounts for some of their customs such as the prohibition from felling big trees or entering the caves for seven days after the annual "Semah" for fear of annoying the spirits.

During the days when the Sultanate of Brunei include what Sarawak is today¹, the only group the Sultan found not giving him tributes and whom the Sultan found hard to trace due to their nomadic habits were the Penans. He thus sent his men to a group of Penans settling in the Baram areas. Accordingly, these men conveyed the Sultan's order that within one week, the group should collect whatever they had for the Sultan as a tribute to his rule. These men were to return in a week's time to collect this 'gift'. Soon after the men left, the Penans discussed what

1. This is definitely much earlier than the coming of the Brookes in the nineteenth century.

they should give as they had nothing to give. Furthermore, they had little respect for the Sultan as they never felt his power nor the benefits of his rule. One of them suggested sending a practical joke in the form of the heads of wild boar knowing that it would insult the Sultan who was a Muslim. Everyone agreed and set out in a group to hunt as many wild boars as possible. Within one week, they had collected a lot of heads; they dried and wrapped these heads up carefully. These parcels were then given to the Sultan's men who came to collect them when the time came.

When the 'gift' reached the Sultan, the Sultan happily unwrapped them. As he unwrapped them one by one, to his dismay and anger, he saw the dried heads of the boars. He asked his men dispose them and in doing so, he cursed the Penans so that they would never increase in number and that they would die of a stomach problem. The Penans believed that true to their curse, the group had begun to catch diarrhoea and passed away. The surviving few began to set up a new dwelling place and lived quite happily for some time. However, once a group of more than a hundred persons was formed, the people would be attacked by the same diarrhoea epidemic again. It thus continued until today. Because of the fear of the epidemic, the Penans tried to disperse everytime the number was large enough, in order to escape the disease. It also aggravated their wanderings, shortening the length of time they would stay in a place.

of time time they would stay in a place.

However, according to the writer's informant, the people began to notice that any Penan who was converted to Islam was not attacked by the epidemic. Thus, one after another, the Penans began to convert themselves into Muslims. In Tanjong Belipat today, the last person to be converted into Muslim was in 1968. Today, the population is above two hundred but the people had not been attacked by any epidemic since then. The Tanjong Belipat population believes that their conversion have served to neutralise the effect of the curse. They even cited the example of an occasion when some of their men went over to help to bury the victimized population in Kampong La'ee, Suai. None of the helpers were affected by the epidemic.

Today, there are also some Penans who remain animists while some still retain their Bungan religion such as the Penans in Kampong Jabatan Suvak. There are also numerous Penans who had been converted to the Christian Faith such as those of Tinjar, Baram. According to Ian Urquhart,

"When a nomadic Penan becomes settled, he will probably not alter his language but he will need to alter his customs."²

In the case of the Tanjong Belipat Penans, they have not only their customs and language but also their religion.

2. Ian Urquhart; (1965), op cit., p 206.

In the process of examining the changes within their beliefs system, the writer proposes to include a few of their traditional beliefs and discuss how much of these beliefs are still retained today.

B. Semba:

The Semba is carried out everytime someone gets hurt at the caves or get sick after visiting the caves. The Semba is meant to appease the spirits who have been displeased with the person due to his behaviour. At the time of the writer's visit, a Semba ceremony was being carried out because a man had fallen into one of the ravines, although he was saved by a shwlf which was jutting out of the side of the ravine, as he was collecting bird's nest. According to the Medicine man, Mamat, the spirits had communicated to him in one of his meditations that someone (whom the villagers suspected to be an outsider) had broken the Semah taboo which was carried out in early January of that year (1978) by entering the caves befor the seven-day period was over. Because of this action, the spirits were angry and demended another sacrifice.

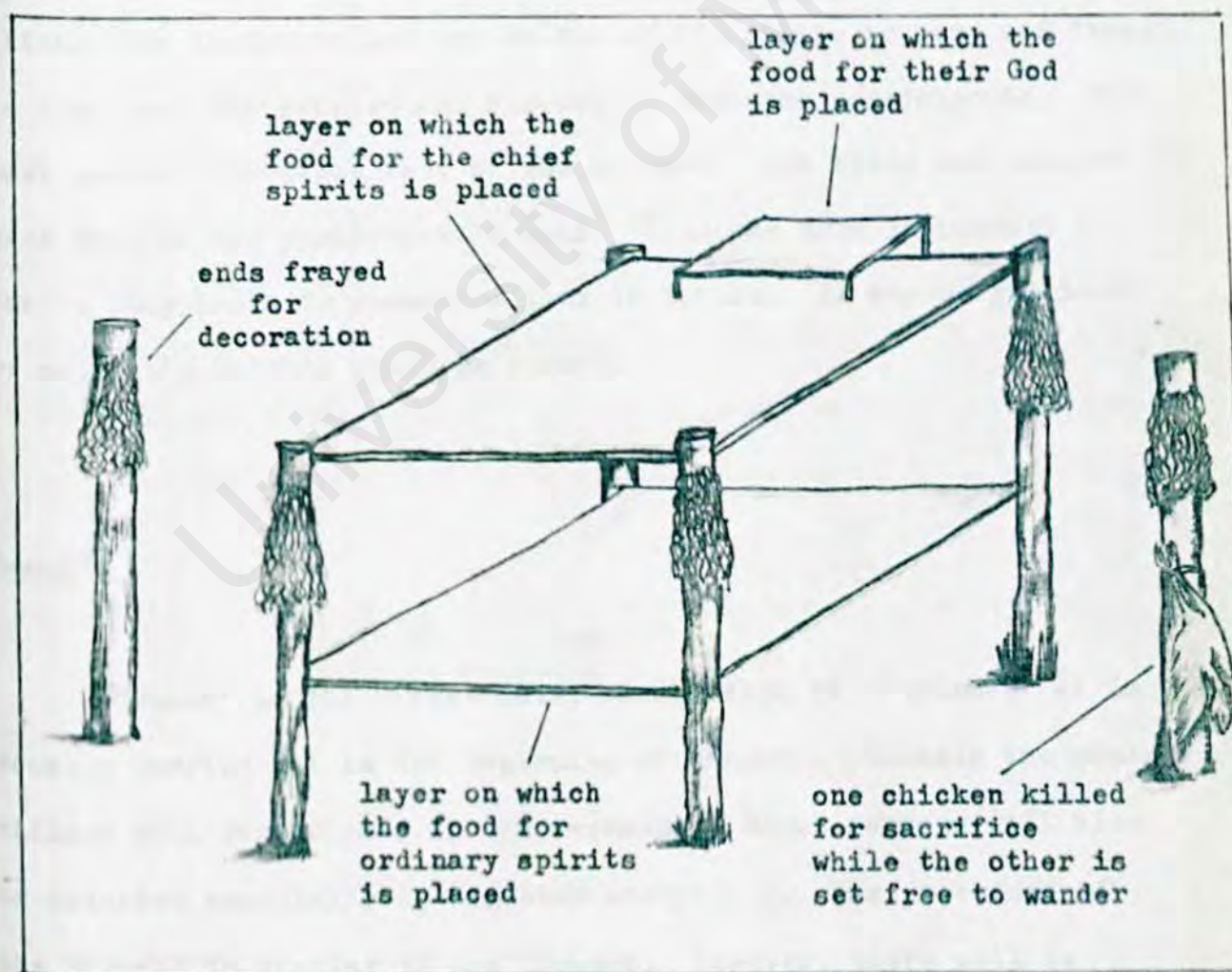
The apparatus for Semba consists of one knife, one cock cock or chicken, any amount of money as a gift³, a stick frayed

3. The money will be given to the person who carries out the Semba ceremony.

food to eat as this feast is supposed to be celebrated by all the spirits in the caves. The "Semba" on the other hand, is only a small feast celebrated by the chief spirits.

During the "Semah" ceremony, the food is placed on a three-layered altar as seen in the diagram below:

Figure 5.1: A diagram showing the "Semah" altar used for offering the sacrifice to the spirits:



to form a flowery decoration, woven leaf-cups filled with "tapoi" or "tuak" (rice wine), seven rolls of three-inch "kirai" filled with tobacco and seven packets of "pinang-kapor" (betel nuts and lime) wrapped up in "sireh" or betel leaves.

The group partaking in the Semba collected the apparatus and made for their destination. At the time of the writer's visit, the Semba took place at the other opening of the caves, where the victim had fallen. They sat together facing the mouth of the cave with their leader in front facing the people. The stick was erected on the ground while the other apparatus were placed close to the stick. The leader called out to the chief spirits to come and feast. He then took the chicken and flapped it over the participants. The last man cut the right foot of the chicken. The blood was smeared over each of the participant's hand. This was done supposedly to enable the spirits to recognize them in future. If anyone got hurt or sick, the spirits would be cursed.

c. "Semah":

"Semah" is the large-scale, annual form of "Sembah". It is usually carried out in the beginning of January. Usually the whole village will participate in the ceremony. Eight persons will also be selected especially to organize everything. The procedure of the "Semah" is similar to the "Sembah". However, there will be

On the top layer, the best food consisting of White and yellow rice and the best cakes will be placed (meant for the head of the spirits). According to information given, this layer has been inserted just recently, following their conversion into Islam. The people believe that the head of the spirits does not drink "tapoi", nor smoke, nor eat "sireh" and "pinang". On the second layer, fourteen cups made from leaves containing "tapoi" or "tuak", fourteen sticks of "kirai" containing tobacco and fourteen "pinang-kapor" packed in "sireh" leaves were placed. These are especially meant for the higher hierarchy of spirits. Yellow and white rice as well as cakes are also included on this layer.

For the lowest layer, meant for the common spirits, an assortment of food as well as cakes are placed. As the ceremony begins, the leader invites all the spirits to feast and drink. He then kills one of the chickens and ties it to the stick close to the altar. The other chicken is then set free to wander in the caves all on its own. As he invites the spirits to feast, he also warns them not to hurt any of the villagers and all those who come to the caves. Should there be any injury or sickness done to these people, the spirit would be cursed with blindness or any equivalent disease afflicted on these victims.

Once the "Semah" ceremony is over, all the people leave the caves. After this, nobody is allowed to enter the caves for seven days in order to allow the spirits to feast to their hearts' content without any disturbances from outsiders. Should anyone

be caught breaking the rule, he will have to pay the fine by performing a "Semba" ceremony. This is because once the spirits are disturbed in their feast, they will be annoyed and are liable to hurt someone who comes to the caves or work in the caves. As cited in the section on "Semba", the man was hurt due to the spirits' annoyance as someone had entered the caves before the "pantang" days were over.

D. The Customary Taboos Practised by the Penans:

Taboos are not unusual in the life of any simple group, especially in the cases of the traditional, animistic believers whose lives are very much guided by their strong awareness that everything has a spirit of its own in the natives' environment. This awareness and fear of the spirits is emphasized by his belief that if these spirits were angered or disturbed, harm and ill-fortune will befall the offender. However, only a few of the taboos are still observed by the aged today while the younger Penans generally ignore them almost completely.

From an aged Penan woman⁴, the writer managed to extract some of the taboos still observed by some of the Penans today whereas some of the more traditional taboos which even the informer

⁴. The informer is one of the few surviving Penans who has arrived with the original wanderers from Bakong.

informer can only vaguely remember, have been long abandoned by the Tanjong Belipat Penan group.

These taboos are classified as:

- a. The general taboos;
- b. Taboos for pregnant women; and
- c. Taboos practised after a death.

a. The general taboos:

These taboos are supposed to be observed by every Penan in his daily activities:

- i. The house should not be swept immediately after a person leaves the house for a journey. It will remain unswept until the owner of the house feels that the person has reached his destination. This is to ensure that the traveller will have a safe journey.
- ii. Whenever a Penan visits a house, it is always safer to go up the house with the back stairs rather than the front way to prevent any curse or charm from befalling the visitor, should there be any set.
- iii. The house should not be swept at night because it is believed that the spirits are most active at night. Should the dust from the broom happen to touch a passing spirit, the spirit may be blinded or hurt. It may thus curse the offender and send ill-fortune to the house.

iv. A house should not be swept after the death of a person, too.

It must remain unswept until the burial of the body. This is to prevent from hurting the dead man's spirit which may be wandering about, and will thus bring a curse to the whole household.

v. During the "bebayoh" or healing ceremony⁵, a visitor is not allowed to go up the house immediately on his arrival. He should sit down below the house or at the staircase for a short while before going up the house. This is to prevent from disturbing the spirits who are present during the healing ceremony.

b. Taboos for pregnant women:

i. Prenatal taboos:

The pregnant woman is not allowed to bath in the evening, after the sunset because at such times, the Penans believed that the spirits are wandering about. It is also believed that especially when there is a light shower at sunset, there may be some malicious spirits among them. These spirits may kill the baby within the womb or even take away the life of its expecting

5. The "Bebayoh" or healing ceremony is carried out by a village medicine man in order to discern the illness of the sick person or consult any form of divination from the spiritual world.

mother. She is also not allowed to eat cold rice or to eat any form of food directly from the pot. This is to protect the health of the child within her womb. Immediately after her meals, she is not allowed to go out of the house. She must not laze in the bed in the morning once the door is open. She is not allowed to remain standing or sitting at the door at any time at all. She may either go right out of the house or stay within the house. These three latter "pantang" or taboos are to protect the expecting mother's health and to enable her to have an easy delivery.

However, there is also a form of "pantang sekali" or complete prohibition by means of nailing a nail against the wall of the house. This nail may be hammered into any part of the wall of the house and will be taken out during the labour pain only. By "pantang sekali", all other taboos are removed and the expecting mother will not need to observe the taboos mentioned earlier. However, this nail has to be taken out during the labour pain because it is believed that the child will not be delivered, i.e., it will remain in the womb, until the nail is removed from the wall.

Even with the "pantang sekali", the woman will still need to wear an "azimat" or a talisman consisting of roots to prevent the evil spirits from devouring the child in her womb.

ii. Postnatal taboos:

For four days after childbirth, the mother is not allowed to do any form of washing. She is not allowed to take her bath for seven days. This is to protect her body from catching chill. The mother is not supposed to take vegetables such as "sayor paku", bamboo shoots or any plants of the similar species for two months. This is because during that time, the child is fed on the mother's milk and should the mother take such food, the child will be affected by a form of stomach trouble the Penans call "penyakit senudeng". After birth, the womb will be kept warm by means of placing the heated stones or smashed bricks wrapped up in rags, on the stomach occasionally. This form of postnatal treatment is similar to the Malays' concept of "bertungku". According to the informant, this is to prevent the womb from lowering. Medicines used are roots which include "akar rumput belasu", "jerangou" and "akar long". This is either boiled or eaten with betel leaves.

c. Taboos practised after a death:

After the death of a person, the family will have to stop work for seven days while the rest of the villagers stop work only for at least a day due to their respect of the spirit of the dead man. During these seven days, the family is forbidden from certain activities:

1. The family concerned should abstain from eating deer because

man is believed to have originated from deer.

- ii. In addition to this food, lemon and mushrooms are also forbidden because it will affect the appearances of the family.⁶
- iii. During the death ceremony, the widow may eat alone, or with her own family, or with other widows only. She is also not allowed to talk to other people because it is believed that she may bring the same fate to the people she talks to.⁷
- iv. There may be no laughter or music or sounds of merry-making within the hearing distance of the house.⁸
- v. The bereaved family is not allowed to visit other houses during the seven days to prevent the family from bringing bad luck to these houses.
- vi. The bereaved family are not supposed to be invited to any feast during that time. Anyone who breaks this rule will have to pay a compensation of one "pikul"⁹ which is equivalent to \$25/-.

6. It is believed that by eating the lemon, the members of the bereaved family will always look "sour" or unhappy and unfriendly while eating mushroom will make them look lifeless for the rest of their lives.

7. This taboo is over after the burial ceremony.

8. This taboo is no longer practised today, among the Tanjong Belipat Penans.

9. "Pikul" is a form of measurement which actually refers to that of gold. One "pikul" according to the Penans is equivalent to \$25/-.

Other Customary Practices:

The Burial Ceremony:

According to the report of Hj. Drahman who obtained his information from Balu Purai, the daughter of Melibaeng, there were originally three kinds of burials⁹:

i. The trunk burial, mainly for children;

A tree is felled and hollowed out. The body is pushed in and the trunk is planted again.

ii. Trunk and earth burial;

The body is put into a hollowed trunk of a tree. This is covered up, caulked and left standing for a while until the fluid from the rotting body is completely drained out through a bamboo tube inserted into the ground. The bones are then collected and given another burial in the ground.

iii. Hill burial;

The highest point of a hill is selected for this burial. The coffin, which is made up of soft wood, is dragged up the hill. It is then left to rot in the open air on the ground. In most cases, the family of the dead man or his relatives do not come back to claim the bones although the extremely bereaved may do so.

9. These burials have been recorded in Tom Harrison and George Jamuh's "Niah, the oldest Inhabitant remembers" in SMJ, Vol VII, No 8 (new series), Dec., 1956, Kuching, pp 459-460.

A more recent burial ceremony based on the funeral of Tabilan's grandfather was recorded by Geoffrey Barnes¹⁰; The body is washed and clothed in clean garments as soon as the person has died. It is then sitted against a board leant against the wall. A saucer is placed on the floor beside each elbow and another at each feet while a lighted match or piece of wood is dropped into each saucer and allowed to burn itself out. Meanwhile, the coffin is made and in the evening, the coffin is brought up the house. The body of the dead person is placed in the coffin. Leafy pieces of sugarcane are placed upright at the foot and the head of the coffin over which a canopy of the best cloth of the dead man is spread. Each of the relatives of the dead person will then tie a string bracelet on which are two small beads and a fragment of a "frying dish" to the right wrist of the dead man.

The dead body is then lift to lie there for a week. During this time, anyone who comes to the house recieves special hospitability and lengthy songs are sung. After seven days, the coffin is taken from the house by four men, put in the boat and taken to the cemetry. The grave is dug so that thehead of the coffin is put in and a plank roof seals the grave. With the coffin is placed the man's blowpipe, spear and "parang hilang"¹¹ whereas in the case of a

10. Refer to Geoffrey Barnes, "Punan Cemeteries in the Niah River" in SMJ, Vol VIII, No 12 (new series), 1958, Kuching, pp 643-645.

11. It should be written as "parang ilang", which is a type of chopper used only for special occassions and celebrations. It is not used in the everyday manual works.

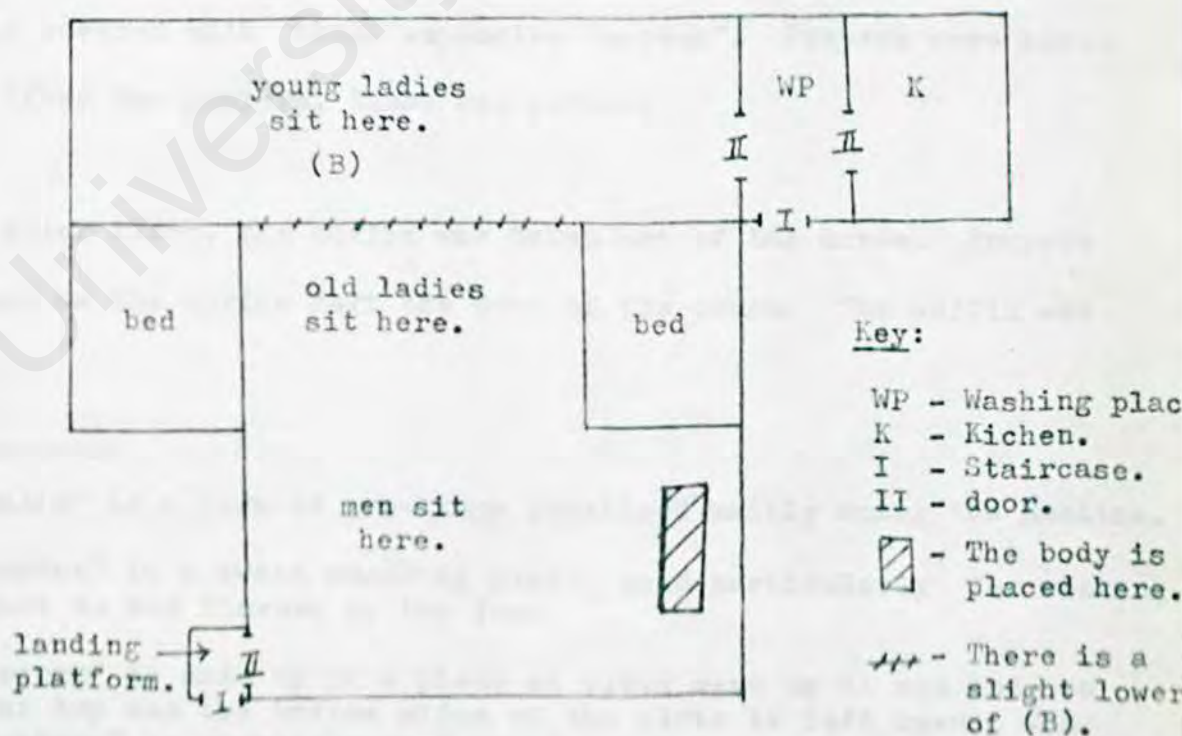
woman, it will only be a "parang" or chopper. In the ground above the grave are placed "one frying dish, one bowl, one plate, two saucers, one large jar, one metal trivet and a basket".¹³ Around the grave, "flags of cloth" are stuck. These are attached to sticks and a piece of sugarcane is stuck to the ground at each end of the grave.

After the decoration of the grave, the funeral party leave the cemetery and return to the house, where relatives have been preparing a meal. When they reach the jetty, the people would come down from the house and turn the boat upside down in order to remove the spirit of the dead man from the boat. Then the boat is righted and the water is baled out. After that, everyone will go up the house but wait for the village headman to take a fowl, chants, kill the fowl, sprinkle the blood on everyone present and dispose the carcass before everyone enters the house. They will then have a meal. For the next seven days, there will be hospitality in the house. On the seventh night after the funeral, there will be a feast whereby a special plate of cake, a saucer of rice and meat, and a glass of wine or water is prepared for the dead man's spirit. After the supposed meal of the spirit, the food is then disposed and the utensils used broken. On the eight night, a lamp is prepared of damar gum. It is lit and thrown to the river where it floats downstream with the current. The ghost of the dead man is supposed to follow this light and never return. For the next month, no drums or gongs are allowed to be beaten in the house.

13. Geoffrey Barnes, op cit., p 644.

The most recent death ceremony which the writer observed during her stay in Kampong Tanjong Belipat in Early April, 1978 was based on the death of Mahli bin Osman. The body was laid on the mat with the banana stem as his pillow for a day. This was mainly intended for the visits of the relatives and friends of dead man. Everyone who came gave some charity money to the bereaved family. This money was meant for buying the needs of the dead man, for the food to feed the visitors and for the family's needs. During the visits, as demonstrated in figure 5.2, the men sat in the front part of the house while the women sat at the back part of the house:

Figure 5.2: A diagram showing the distribution of the people during their visit to the dead man's house:



Similar to the Malay practice, the visitor would "salam"¹¹ with everyone of the same sex as he or she entered the house. Drinks and biscuits were served. In the morning of the burial, strings of young betel shoots taken from the betelnut palm, "pandan" leaves¹² and flowers were made and a white cloth for wrapping up the body was sewn. Meanwhile, the men carried the platform and water for bathing the body up the house. The burial service was carried out according to the Muslim rite.

After the was bathed by the Imam and some men, it was laid on the mat and covered with three "sarong".¹³ Four men together with the Imam then said some prayers. The "sarong" of the praying group were provided for by the bereaved family. After the prayers, each of the praying group was given a gift of money. The dead body was then put on a plank with a bamboo canopy. The bamboo canopy was then covered with three expensive "sarong". Prayers were again said. After the prayers, lunch was served.

After lunch, the coffin was taken out of the house. Prayers were said as the coffin left the door of the house. The coffin was

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11. "Salam" is a form of greetings practiced mainly among the Muslims.
 12. "Pandan" is a sweet smelling plant, used particularly for cooking, meant to add flavour to the food.
 13. "sarong" is made up of a piece of cloth sewn up at one end, so the top and the bottom sides of the cloth is left open. The "sarong" is popularly used among the Malays and the various ethnic groups of Sarawak.

then taken to the boat which took it to the cemetery at Lubok Antu, further down the Kuala Tanggap. Only the family and the helpers consisting of sixteen men went with the coffin. On reaching the grave, the coffin was placed into the hollow which had been prepared by a grave-digger. The Imam sat on the plank placed over the grave. While the Imam said the burial prayers, the water within a China kettle wrapped with a white cloth was poured around the coffin and the other graves surrounding it. Another glass jug containing water mixed with "pandan" leaves and flowers were also poured over the coffin of the dead man and the other graves surrounding it. The coffin was then buried with soil, once the prayers was over.

After the burial, everyone returned to the dead man's house. Most of the visitors were gone by the time the family and helpers in the burial ceremony returned to the house. Usually, the remaining few wait for the return of the people from the burial were invited up the house for "bubur kacang"¹⁴. The same burial ceremony is still practised in Tanjong Belipat today.

14. "Bubur kacang" is a popular dish, whereby the red peas is boiled with coconut milk and sugar. The Melanaus and the Malays also practise the same procedure of calling the visitors for a meal of "bubur kacang" after burial services.

b. The Traditional Agricultural Practices:¹⁵

The Penan custom does not allow him to cut down big trees. He may only cut down small trees and branches which are collected for constructing his temporary dwelling place. Before the felling season, there will be a feast literally translated as "feeding the spirit of the land". This feast will consist of yellow rice, white rice, seven cooked eggs, seven uncooked eggs, fourteen betel leaves ("sireh") with betel nuts and lime, fourteen cigarettes, fried dried padi ("bertih"), "tapoi" wine¹⁶, salt and one killed chicken.

During the felling season itself, certain taboos have to be observed. The Penans would listen for the sound of the Little Spider Hunter ("Manok Tissit") before he leaves the house. If the bird made the sound "seet" in front of the person as he left the house, he should return home. If he continued in his intention to fell the trees, it meant that the person might get injured during his work. Otherwise, his padi would be spoilt by some animals. If there were the sound of a deer heard the night before the felling, the person would also abstain from felling the trees. It meant that if the padi were not eaten by the deer later on, the owner of the padi field might pass away in the near future. During the

15. The agriculture practices apply only to Penans who have settled and are involved in agricultural activities that are more permanent in nature.

16. "Tapoi" wine is made from the "tapoi" fruit which has been fermented.

felling of the trees, it is forbidden to hear trees falling unless the person knows for sure that someone has fallen it. This denotes that if the padi produced during that year were good, the owner of the padi field would not live long.

For the first three days, felling or slashing is done only for the maximum of one hour to ensure the worker's safety. During the first three days, should there be a moon seen on those nights, the person should stop working for the next three days. It means that should the person continue in his tasks, his padi were in danger of being eaten by the deer. It is also forbidden to work if death occurs at anytime because it is believed that the dead person's spirit will be wandering at that time and will be annoyed by any person's disrespect of its presence by continuing in his work as though nothing has happened.

During the burning period, if the neighbour's fire went over, to the other neighbour's land, farming would be forbidden in that burnt area unless the victimized party were compensated. The compensation consists a "parang" or chopper, bronze bracelet, chicken, plate (but it should not be an iron one), \$25/- and "semah". The "semah" will consist of one chicken, seven cigarettes, one egg, seven betel leaves with betel nuts and "kapur" and seven leaf-cups of "tapoi" wine. This is because it is believed that the fire has killed the spirit of the land and to revive this spirit, the "semah" is necessary. The blood of the chicken will give new blood to the spirit, the "parang" will become its bones, the

bracelet will become its veins, the plate will serve as the spirit's dwelling place and the rest (the betel leaves, cigarettes and wine) will be its food to revive its strength. During the "semah", no-one is allowed to enter the area. Should anyone do so, he would have to pay the owner the same compensation by repeating the "semah" performance.

During the sowing season, the Penans also get the information concerning the ripe time to do so from their environment. They will look for a star known as the "latip" star or the Morning Star. Every three o'clock in the morning, they point to this star with their right hands. If the bracelet on the hand drops to the arm, the time is just right for sowing. According to the writer's Penan informant, if the West Wind were strong, the star would be faster. This makes eleven months for each padi season. The star gives the exact timing for the season because if the sowing were started too early, the padi would bear poor quality padi.

Certain days are also observed during the sowing period. The best days are the thirtieth, first and ninth days of the moon. It is, however, better if these days fall on Wednesdays for the sowing of the first seeds. If the moon were not full enough, the padi produced would not be filled with fat grains. It also depends on the padi type, for example, if the seeds belonged to the hill padi type, the Penans would use the fifteenth day of the moon for sowing. If the seeds were of the slow variety, they would use the first day of the moon instead. Otherwise, the padi would be eaten

by rats. However, sowing should never be done on rainy days, because this would cause the padi plants to die of fungus disease.

F. Conclusion:

In examining the effect of Islam and their new beliefs on the Penans of Tanjong Belipat, it is not unusual to find an assimilation of the new beliefs into the old beliefs system. Although a great deal of the traditional beliefs and practices had been discarded in place of the new ones, something of the old tradition still be traced.

The "Semah" and the "semba" has been retained but today, they have added a special place for the God they believe to rule over the dominant and the common spirits. For the food of this God, the wine, cigarettes and the betel leaves mixture have been omitted. Some of the traditional taboos are still retained in birth, marriage and death although the birth, marriage and death ceremonies and practices themselves are now done according to the Islamic Law and teachings. It can therefore be seen in the course of examining the change in the beliefs systems that although the religion and the basic practices have been changed and moulded to suit their present environment, the traditional values and practices have not been totally discarded.

CHAPTER 6:ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP:A. Selection of Traditional Leaders:

Every community has a form of administrative organization in order to maintain a coherent system of social relation by which the people are controlled. Such social control is indispensable if a social relationship which is stable and predictable is to persist. The rules and enforcement of administration and the means to leadership differ with societies, but they ultimately aim at securing a certain degree of social order. In most societies, the qualifications for leadership depend on age, sex, property, ability and reputation.

The Penan society, like most extremely simple, nomadic societies, originally had no formal form of tribal organization apart from small family groups which also make up the very effective economic units. However, even the simplest gathering and hunting people must cooperate for certain purposes such as protecting themselves from their enemies. Among the Penans, leadership is partially ascribed to a person by means of heritage. However, in cases where offsprings of leaders are not present and since class systems do not exist among the Penans there, the eldest and the most able man is usually elected as the

leader on reaching a new dwelling place.¹ Skill in hunting and general excellence are important qualifications in potential leaders. According to T. Kaboy², so much importance is placed on the leader's hunting skill and ability that the lawful heir may be set aside if he is not capable enough.

Under normal conditions³, the leader will decide the migration of his group once the food resources become exhausted in that area. As far as possible, when the existing leader is not around, due to the dispersal of the group as a result of their flights or due to his untimely death, the new leader will be chosen from a family where there has been a leader or a relative of a leader. They believe that this is the best procedure in choosing a leader because as the person has been brought up in an atmosphere where he is used to having visitors in the home, mixing with the people, making decisions and leading the others, he becomes the most qualified person for the post

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1. The Penans, according to an informant, used to flee from their dwelling places due to attacks of diseases. For details on the diseases, refer to chapter 5. With the flight, the members of the family and the community will be scattered about and new leaders have to be elected to take care of the new groups.
 2. Refer to Tuton Kaboy, "The Penan Aput", in SMJ, Vol XXII, No 43 (new series), Kuching, Jan:Dec., 1974, p 290.
 3. Other causes of dispersal of the members of the group may a search for food.

of leadership.

Such a procedure for selecting leaders is still practised in Kampong Jabatan Suvak, Suai. The present "tua kampong", August is the nephew of Meneang who has recently retired from his "tua kampongship". Meneang's father had also been a "tua kampong". This traditional way of selecting leaders is yet practised in many parts of Baram and among most Penans in Sarawak.⁴

B. Duties of a Traditional Leader:

Although his position is not very clearly defined, the leader has strong authority and decision making power. He is responsible for the peace and organization within the community. He may punish anyone who has become a nuisance to the society. The leader does not interfere in domestic strife but if it were too prolonged and were affecting the community's tranquility, he would act as the judge and punish the wrong doer. Punishment usually consists of a gift of some form such as a blow-pipe or a cooking pot to the victimized party. While the upbringing of a child is the parents' affair, the leader would interfere if the

4. This information was revealed by one of the Penan informants. The Tanjong Belipat Penans still keep in touch with his relatives in the Barams and in Suai and they visit each other occasionally. This accounts for their awareness of what goes on in the other communities.

child were so naughty as to disturb the neighbours.

He is responsible for the search of a new dwelling place for his group once the food resources of a place dwindle. Local hunting and fishing is considered more of an individual matter. However, the leader will lead in food gathering sessions. In the case of health, the leader is also responsible for the well-being of his people. This includes treating his people by traditional means if it needs be or by simply giving advice on the treatment of the patients in less serious cases. He may also arrange for a mentally deranged member of the community to be housed separately in a caged house where his family or relatives are responsible for his food and care.

C. Leadership in Tanjong Belipat Today:

The Penans of Tanjong Belipat, however, have adopted a new system of electing their leader by what they prefer to look at as a "democratic election".⁵ This new election has been applied in the election of the two most recent leaders. According to the older folks, this system of selecting the "tua kampong"

5. By the "democratic election", every member above fifteen in village is allowed to vote for the proposed candidates. These candidates may be proposed and seconded by any of the members of the village who is above twenty-one. The leader elected is recognised by the government as the "tua kampong" of the village.

is not too successful. They are not pleased with both selections; the first being too timid, reticent, public-shy and not dynamic enough and the second being too young and inexperienced. These leaders therefore fail to get the cooperation of the older folks. In fact, it is due to this "tua kampong" question and the inability of the "tua kampong" to unite and win the hearts of his people that there is a split between the upper and the lower part of the kampong with the Tanjong Belipat as the dividing point. Previously, they used to participate in the community's works, in whatever events or affairs of the village together. After the split, there seems to be two villages instead of the present one.

While they still maintain close contacts individually, the former solidarity and unity have disappeared. Recently, in their construction of the bridges, for example, the ones down-river have completed their bridges on their own. The Penans upriver were just building their bridges on their part of the village during the time of the writer's visit. Although the "tua kampong" had sent circulars informing everyone that there was a meeting prior to the bridge-building, only the upper half of the village attended the meeting and later participated in the construction itself.

The older folks felt that the old way of selecting leaders should have been retained. This new way of electing a leader had become a joke among these old folks. These folks made their

judgement of the new leaders on the basis situations in the communities with traditional leaders. The ones with the traditional leaders, according to the Penans of Tanjong Belipat, are better governed and the people respect and listen to their leaders whereas the recent "tua kampongs" of Tanjong Belipat are not as effective in their ability to control and unite the people. The older folks' views may be accepted but the writer observes other reasons besides the leader's inability, for the lack of cohesion and cooperation among the Tanjong Belipat community.

In examining the counterpart of Tanjong Belipat community, the Kampong Jabatan Suvak, it will be seen that other factors are playing significant roles in the cohesion of the latter community. Despite the fact that main economic activity is lumbering and the economy is based on cash income, the community still retains its traditional practices. The Kampong Jabatan Suvak community retains more of its traditional values and practices than the Kamong Tanjong Belipat community. As the place (Suai), in comparison with the geographical location of Tanjong Belipat village⁶ is quite secluded, Kampong Jabatan Suvak is therefore

6. Tanjong Belipat village is in close proximity to the archeological site of the Niah Caves, which attracts visitors from other parts of Sarawak and from other countries.

less exposed to the devastating effects of outsiders and towns. Although they have a school of their own, the Penans in Kampong Jabatan Suvak are still reserved and shy towards strangers and flock together among themselves when they are in a large group. This may have caused them to be more submissive and obedient to their leader. Their complete acceptance of the leader is apparent in their leaving the affairs of the village to the leader and their readiness to obey his wishes and advices.

The Penan group in Tanjong Belipat, however, have been exposed to outsiders ever since the Brookes' rule in the nineteenth century. The interest in guano and birdnest and later, the archeological importance of the Niah Caves have brought outsiders to the area. Except for the Chinese primary school which the Penans cannot afford to attend, there is no government-aided school such as that of Suai, available to educate the Penans of Tanjong Belipat. However, their constant contact with outsiders and their adoption of the Malay culture after their conversion into Muslims seem to give them a certain amount of confidence and a sense of identity. They tend to be more outgoing and friendly towards strangers. They are more sure of themselves, independent of each other, and more aggressive and active in their social relationships. Such a personality could have caused them to be more aggressive in the running of their community. Each person feels that he is entitled to his own opinion and when he does not agree with the leader's decision or feels that he has not been considered when a decision

is made, he feels more free to express his disapproval by openly not participating in the activities of the village.

Another possible reason for the lack of cohesion among the Kampong Tanjong Belipat Penans as compared to that of Kampong Jabatan Suvak and other Penan communities may be that of the economic activities. As mentioned earlier, the main economic activity of the Kampong Jabatan Suvak Penans is lumbering. The more traditional Penan society sticks to hunting and gathering wild jungle products as their livelihood. The Tanjong Belipat Penans, however, have a diversity of economic activities varying from collecting jungle products, collecting guano and birdnests, agricultural activities to working in shipping companies, timber companies and oil companies. Some of them even work in the Meseum Office and other government offices. As such, those who have resigned from their jobs with outside companies or government offices return to Tanjong Belipat with a different attitude towards his fellow villagers and his leader. He may feel more self-opinionated than before. He is therefore less liable to be submissive to his leader should he feel that the decision of the leader did not agree with him or the leader has been too harsh or too rash in his decision. Whatever may have been the cause, the Penans of Tanjong Belipat do percieve a weakining in the leader's discretionary power and the community's cohesion and cooperation.

D. The Leader Within the State Government:

The "tua Kampong" is legally recognized by the state government as the head of the village. By right, he will be held responsible for any form of disturbances within the village. He will also be consulted in any major issues concerning the village such as the distribution of lands to the villagers or the giving away of land as a timber concession area. However, the "tua kampong" is not given any monthly salary by the State Government.

Suggestions have been made as to electing a "pengulu" instead of having the "tua kampong" as the leader. The "pengulu" will be appointed by the government.⁷ The "pengulu" will be paid a monthly salary by the government. During the writer's visit in April, 1978, decisions as to accept or reject this proposal had not been made.

E. Conclusion:

There is an apparent movement towards a more complex pattern of leadership and administrative organization. While

7. The person appointed by the government are, in most cases, well-known among the government officials. In fact, it is an indirect form of control of the rural villages for the State Government.

the only qualifications for leadership before were merely the ability of the leader in leading his people in their search for new dwelling places and his skill in hunting and food gathering, such qualifications are less applicable today. Instead, the qualities expected of a leader are his ability to talk to his people and to "outsiders", his educational background⁸ and his popularity among the people. This change in the qualifications of the leader sought for is perhaps due to the changes in the people's attitudes and their economic activities. While their main economic activities were hunting and gathering during their nomadic days, today they have changed to a diversity of activities which tend to be more cash oriented, and carried on the individual basis rather than group work. Education and a change in their values and attitudes due to the constant contact with the outside world and conversion to Islam as compared to their only contact with the Kayans and Kenyahs during their nomadic, pagan days, have also served to change their attitude towards leadership and administrative activities.

Today, the government have also played a more positive role in their lives. They could apply to the government and the Sarawak Museum for any form of financial aid and administrative

8. Although there is only the Chinese primary school and the people are too poor to send their children there, a few of them manage to send their children there until standard four.

aid. Due to the increasing positive influence on the Tanjong Belipat Penan community, the government even suggests having a "pengulu" instead of a "tua kampong". Although the only difference will be the "pengulu" may be supported by the people, he will be selected by the government officials. He will be thus progovernment and he will also be paid for his post. The "pengulu" system has not been imposed yet but the trend shows that it soon will be.

CONCLUSION:AN OVERVIEW OF THE VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE:

In concluding the study on the changes that are taking place in the Penan community of Tanjong Belipat, the writer proposes to have an overview of the various dimensions of change before examining the agents of these changes and finally, the degree of social change and "progress" among the Penans of Tanjong Belipat.

A. Settlement Pattern and Dwelling Places:

The settlements, as in the past, are still built along the river banks. Although there has been a change in the structure of the dwellings from the traditional longhouses to those of the permanent houses, "progress" have not reached to the level of houses provided with modern facilities such as water and electricity supplies. They still receive their water supply from the river and the rain and make use of kerosene lamps instead of electric lightings. The layout of the house itself has changed from that of a multi-purpose room to a house with specific places for certain activities such as the kitchen for cooking and eating, the bedroom-lounge for sleeping and relaxing and the place for sanitation which used to be within the house is today given a place of its own by the riverside. Household utensils such as plates and cooking pots, food such as tinned food, milk and sugar as well as washing detergents, soaps, brushes and buckets have also been introduced into the homes of the

Tanjong Belipat Penans today.

B. Kinship and Family Systems:

While the system of recruiting members into the Penan society remains the same except for the need to register births, deaths and adoptions of any member of the group, there is a change in the form of family types from that of a predominantly extended family type to that of the nuclear family. There has also been an acceptance of the Islamic values and practices into their marriage, divorce and inheritance systems.

C. Economic Organization:

There has been a definite change from the nomadic days of the Tanjong Belipat Penans when they depend almost entirely on the environment for survival to their settled life today. Even with their initial settling down in Tanjong Belipat, they still depended very much on the jungle and the river for food. Today, however, although they still obtain food from the jungle and the river, dwindling resources no longer force them to wander to other places to search for food. The Tanjong Belipat Penans have learnt to cultivate their own food, although their agricultural activities are merely at the subsistence level. Moreover, the cash obtained from jobs such as collecting guano, birdnests from the caves

as well as gathering pepper from the Chinese pepper gardens have enabled them to purchase food and other "needs" from the neighbouring Chinese shophouses in Batu Niah.

Religion and the Beliefs System:

Although the Tanjong Belipat Penans have been converted into Muslims, they still retain part of their animistic beliefs and practices in ceremonies such as the "semah" or "semba" and a few of the traditional taboos. Thus, although the religion and the basic practices have been adapted to suit the present environment, a certain aspect of the traditional values and practices have been retained. The impact of religion on the lives of the Penans may be clearly seen in the birth, marriage and death ceremonies as well as in the distribution of inheritance. The change in the religion and beliefs have also possibly changed the Penan's attitude toward cleanliness, hygiene and moral. The Tanjong Belipat Penans no longer keep the animals within the house, for example, while the Penans of Suai and the Upper Baram who have not adopted Islam still do so.

Administrative Organization and Leadership:

There has also been an apparent change in the basic concept of leadership among the Tanjong Belipat Penans. The qualities expected of a leader have changed from that of the ability in leading

his people in their search for food and new dwelling places to that of his sociability, popularity among his people and his educational and financial background. The headman now has only his role as an administrative leader within the village although he has no salary for his post yet. He no longer conducts the customary practices such as the "semah" which is taken care of by an old man who acts as the "Ketua Adat" or the head of the customs. He no longer gives medical advice or aid. The Penans of Tanjong Belipat now go to the Batu Niah Government Clinic for medical advice or care. There is a possibility that there will be a change whereby the headman will become the "Pengulu" employed by the Government to take care of the administration of the village.

Today, the State Government is playing a more positive role in in the people's lives in the sense that since births, marriages and deaths have to be registered, land grants required to make landownership legal, clinic available to take care of the people's health and government aid may be applied for, the people are more conscious of the government than during their nomadic days when the government in power (like the rule of the Sultanate of Brunei) found it difficult to trace and therefore rule the Penans.

G. The agents of change:

In the course of examining the dimensions of change with

the Tanjong Belipat Penan society, it is apparent that the agents of change include that of the rule of the Government, the religion and the impact of the "outsiders" on the people. The Government introduced factors such as the registration of births, deaths and marriages, as well as other forms of aid to the people. By doing so, the people's attitude towards land and health as well as education had changed. They no longer take such matters for granted.

Religion, especially Islam, has also been seen to affect the people towards moral and hygiene as a whole. It has also changed the peoples's concept of death, marriage and inheritance as well as their other animistic beliefs and practices.

Yet another factor which affects the Penan's attitudes and personality is the effects of their encounter with visitors and their neighbours. Their attitude towards their environment have changed in the sense that they no longer percieve the environment as the "sponsor" and themselves as the passive "accepters". They no longer percieve their dwelling places as temporary. Instead, they have learnt how to grow rice and other forms of food from their neighbours, to collect guano and birdnests for cash as well as earn other means of cash.

The change in the economic activities have indeed played a significant role in the settling down of the Penans. They no longer depend too much on the environment for survival. As noted earlier,

the dwindling resources no longer force them to wander to new places in search for food. The cash earned from their jobs have enabled them to purchase food and clothings from the shophouses in Batu Niah while the agricultural products are quite sufficient to feed them.

However, it is difficult to pin-point exactly which is the cause and which is the effect as all these factors are interrelated. The adoption of Islam could have taught them to be more hygienic thus causing less deaths; as a result of this decrease, they could stay more permanently in one place. On the other hand, the change in the economic activities could have brought about the settled way of life, too, thus allowing the government to have a more effective implementation of the developmental policies and supply aid to the aid to the people. The settled way of life and the sense of permanency could have encouraged the Penans of Tanjong Belipat to develop individualism of which is represented by the existence of the predominantly nuclear family type, the individual ownership of land and property and the more active participation in the administration of the village.

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